

# EYEBALL

THE EUROPEAN SEX & HORROR REVIEW.

ISSUE No. 1 - AUTUMN 1989 - £1.75



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"EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN"  
"FIVE DOLLS FOR AN AUGUST MOON"  
*and more!*



Question: Do you need another horror /exploitation magazine?

Answer: **DAMN RIGHT** you do!

Obviously I would say that, but having got the little bit of crass sales talk I can stomach out of the way, I'd like us to briefly have a look at the main magazines already in existence to see why it's true! From America there's the increasingly maligned FANGO-RIA and its slightly less abysmal sister-mag' GOREZONE: good stills, poor writing, no reviews or critical perspective to speak of, and chief drawback - a preponderance of articles pertaining to SPFX in USA product, most of which is aimed at mid-teen audiences, who seem at best undemanding, at worst severely retarded. Then there's DEEP RED, covering a wide range of material but written by gibbering loons who use phrases like "boffo socko barf-o-rama!", "chow down, Lucio!" and "phew, gotta love this guy!". Six-pack journalism at its worst. In this country, we can go from the sublime to the ridiculous, the latter option being offered by SAMHAIN, where uninspired writing is further marred by ugly design and the unforgivable inclusion of "fan artwork", an idea better suited to a Grange Hill DIY magazine project than a genuine genre publication. For the sublime, we have four issues of SHOCK XPRESS per year; high class and well informed it manages to be literate without being stuffy and witty without being crass. As a contributor, I might be expected to praise SHOCK, but I'm speaking as a reader first and foremost...honestly! SHOCK XPRESS is most notorious of course for the abrasive editorial policy of editor Stefan Jaworzyn, a man who does not suffer fools gladly, and although this just seems like good sense to me, EYEBALL will refrain from using similar editorial tactics in the interests of what I hope will become our individual style. Anyway, that's only four issues a year...

Over recent months, a number of new genre publications have sprung up, but none the less, the choice available remains stranded between illiterate 'head-in-the-trough' journalism and epistles from the Tom Savini Fan Club. (STARBURST, of course, can barely be described as an organ of the horror genre at all these days; despite the spectacle of Alan Jones hanging on in there by the skin of his whatever, it resembles nothing so much as the fawning biz-mouthpiece available free in cinema foyers.)

So what makes EYEBALL so special? First and foremost, we intend to take the genre seriously; the last few years of movie output, particularly in America, has seen the much vaunted connection between 'humour' and horror develop into a bloated cancer, eating away at the genre until its late eighties manifestations have become indistinguishable from such cretinous 'frat-house' flicks as MEATBALLS or ANIMAL HOUSE. Part of the reason why EYEBALL is devoted to European movies is precisely because, in the main, they have avoided the juvenile cowardice of playing horror and violence entirely for laughs. Whilst it is admittedly difficult to watch a film like the ridiculous BEAST IN HEAT without smirking, I think it's fair to say that all who write for EYEBALL prefer to be disturbed and provoked by a horror film, rather than merely indulging in that peculiarly eighties brand of hollow cynicism which treats cinema as a spectacle without resonance or personal relevance.

Secondly, EYEBALL writers will make full use of the extra space created by our decision not to conduct three page John Bueschler interviews and 'draw "The Thing" ' competitions; nearly all reviews will be detailed, extensive and hopefully informative. Generally our reviews will be written with the appalling scarcity of these movies in mind. Small video shops that were once prime hunting grounds for the obscure, bizarre and terminally sleazy have been replaced by fluorescent-lit mini-marts who won't stock a movie made before 1986 unless it has spawned a succession of vacuous sequels. As for 'the best place to see a movie', even our capital city can offer the genre enthusiast little more than late night screenings of BEETLEJUICE and THE

WITCHES OF EASTWICK, or all night Freddy Kruger marathons, playing to drunken buffoons who pay their £5 to belch dim-witticisms at a captive audience.

It shouldn't be this way - but it is. The chances of someone outside the bootleg networks scattered around the country (mainly in the South, as usual), getting to see wonderful films like Fulci's DON'T TORTURE A DUCKLING are woefully slim. But it is still a pleasure to read about them, I hope you'll agree. I know that, despite the probability I'll never see them, I personally found the accounts of José Mojica Marins' films in "The Aurum Horror Film Encyclopædia" fascinating. There's no doubt that reading about a film is nowhere near enough; it's the cinema first, video second, with the ravings of journalists a distinct third! But until our sad, petty little country improves, all there's going to be to show these films ever existed are magazines like this.

Compensating for the scarcity of the films we review has led to a rather awkward little problem; should our reviews divulge plot details and endings? Despite the possibility that doing so might somehow spoil a reader's enjoyment of a movie, if it ever turned up, I have in several cases had to opt for including such information. Not only because there is so little chance of readers seeing the films, but also in order to understand and discuss their content intelligently. The comparisons made between NIGHT TRAIN MURDERS and LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT in this issue, for instance, are unavoidably bound up in the plot twists and climaxes of both films, and they seemed interesting enough to make it worth 'giving away' the plot of Lado's (lesser known) film. Anyway, whether you agree or disagree with this policy, write and let us know.

Finally, I'd like to point out that, although we've chosen to cover only European films, we aren't completely unappreciative of America's achievements. Narrowing things down to movies from this side of the Atlantic is as much a way of giving EYEBALL an immediately distinct identity as it is a reaction against Jason, Freddy, Troma and Michael bloody Myers. Even then Ramsey Campbell fiendishly sought to stretch our definition by sneaking in references to a couple of his favorite Mexican movies! And, for the record, the absence of reviews about Canadian films is in no way meant as a slight against David Cronenberg, whose movies, particularly VIDEO DROME and DEAD RINGERS, stand head and shoulders above practically the entire genre. (Not that the audience for the Scala cinema's recent all-night Cronenberg programme would agree; THE FLY, DEAD RINGERS and RABID went down without incident, but the reception that greeted his rare early films CRIMES OF THE FUTURE and STEREO fell nothing short of hatred. Anyone who, like myself, actually turned up to see those movies, must have been astonished at the sheer violence of the reaction against them. By the time STEREO came on, Cronenberg's name on the credits triggered vicious and quite humourless abuse, to the effect that if he was to turn up in the cinema, he'd get his fucking head kicked in! Bad programming from the Scala I suppose, but if anyone is in any doubt about how hostile the mainstream 'youth' audience is to, call it what you will, art/experimental cinema, take note of this account!) Anyway, I digress...

Many of the films covered in this issue have barely been written about in detail before, and it is my intention that future editions of EYEBALL will continue to cast some light on Europe's lost, forgotten or reviled horror output - If you are the sort of person who would rather see Jesus Franco slicing his way through the leading role of THE SADIST OF NOTRE DAME than witness Robert Englund vainly attempting to join 'the greats' of the genre by portraying THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA, then EYEBALL is worth your time and money!

Stephen E. Thrower  
July 1989.



(Ramsey Campbell must surely need no introduction to even the most casual fan of the macabre. Books like "The Face That Must Die", "Incarnate", "The Influence" and his most recent novel "Ancient Images" are undoubtedly amongst the most chilling and imaginative horror fiction of this or any other time. He is also a witty and perceptive movie critic who combines a film-buff's enthusiasm with the precise, lucid prose style of his fiction, as will be evident from the following piece. ST.)

This is a disorganized reminiscence of favourite Italian and Spanish horror films. I've been advised that Mexican movies will not be allowed: a pity, since it means I can't quote that haunting line from **NIGHT OF THE BLOODY APES** ("Move over the operating table and prepare the gorilla") or conjure up memories of **BRAINIAC**, the film about the Count whose head swells up and unrolls a long tongue with which he sucks out people's brains (presumably too much for our censor when it was made, and too little for any distributor these days). Still, I hope to recall some strange delights, and at least now I don't have to brood over the dismal quartet of Karloff's Mexican films.

I'm of the generation for whom Mario Bava's **LA MASCHERA DEL DEMONIO** (the first Italian film I ever heard of, under its first English-language title **BLACK SUNDAY**) became a legend. It turned up unannounced as part of the National Film Theatre's Christmas feast for horror fans in 1960, as a last-minute substitute when **FREAKS** proved unavailable. Various correspondents of mine (Pat Kearney, Alan Dodd and, I believe, Michael Parry) wrote to me to commend the film for horror and atmosphere. You

may imagine my dismay when I learned that the BBFC had refused it a certificate on the grounds that they would have had to cut it so heavily that it would make no sense. My aversion to film censorship may well have been born at that moment. The censor's solicitude didn't extend to the first Italian horror movie I sought out, Riccardo Freda's **L'ORRIBILE SEGRETO DEL DOTTOR HICHCOCK**, which

turned up (appropriately enough, in Barbara Steele's birthplace) in a version which allowed Doctor Hichcock to keep his secret, twelve minutes worth of it, and even suppressed it in the English title (**THE TERROR OF DOCTOR HICHCOCK**). Barbara Steele and Robert Flemyng, and the often startling use of colour and lighting, made up for its absence to an unexpected extent. Years later I was delighted to get hold of the Vampix videocassette, which proved to be uncensored. Freda's timing of his effects seems to me to be admirable, and the restored scenes of necrophilia are disconcerting as much for their delicacy and agonized romanticism as for what they show.

Bava's **BLACK SABBATH** has no connection with **BLACK SUNDAY** except their director, but I didn't know that when I went twenty miles to see it in the early sixties. The second segment

appears to make no sense because (as I understand it) the relationships between the characters has been heterosexualized in the dubbing, but the first segment ("A Drop of Water") in particular was worth my journey. "Films and Filming" complained that it failed to make clear what was real and what was hallucinated, which sounds like praise to me. I think it's the most frightening short ghost story I've ever seen on a screen, with only Jonathan Miller's version of "Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad" coming close.

A film I haven't seen for most of twenty-five years is Riccardo Freda's **CALTIKI**, and I suppose it's conceivable that viewing it now might dismay me as much as re-reading William Sloane disappointed Harlan Ellison (which is why you won't find Sloane discussed in "Horror: the Hundred Best Books"). Still, many images from it have haunted me - the subterranean lake of the monster in particular - and it wasn't so long after my last look at it that I claimed in "The Arkham Collector" that it was the most Lovecraftian of films. I think that that may well still be true. Certainly the notion of this material directed by Freda, and atmospherically photographed by Bava in monochrome makes me anxious to see the film revived.

It's about time I noted something Spanish. I admit to a certain fondness for some of Paul Naschy's films, especially his wolfman series. The combination of natural locations, proliferating monsters, stock shots of London which in one instance are made to represent Scotland by the addition of bagpipes on the soundtrack, with a naïve conviction in the midst of the most unlikely plotting, I sometimes find irresistible. **WEREWOLF'S**

**SHADOW**, available uncensored on British video for a while, is probably my favourite, not least for the way Naschy barely remarks the presence of the odd walking corpse and for the typical Naschy mixture of an atmosphere reminiscent of the Universal multiple monster movies with some surprising gore and sex. Most of these surprises were originally cut by the British censor from the version I saw double-billed with de Ossorio's **TOMBS OF THE BLIND**



Boris Karloff in **BLACK SABBATH**

**DEAD**. I still think that the blind dead, at least in this debut film, are among the scarier ghosts in the cinema, almost worthy of "Thurnley Abbey", that most terrifying of English ghost stories. The uncensored version of **TOMBS** features an unnervingly erotic bondage-in-underwear ritual killing, but makes the blind dead look like bits of rock half-buried in the mud of the international video transfer. Graham Bright and his fellow clowns have a lot to answer for.

I did manage to see all the allegedly offensive films before they were swept away by the panic started, I believe, by a reporter who illustrated his censoriousness in the "Sunday Times" with the cover of the video of Lamberto Bava's **MACABRE**. I'll admit I wouldn't mind seeing that cover disappear, because it manages to give away the image to which the film builds so carefully. This



is one of the bleaker psychological horror films, impressively acted and atmospheric, despite its irrelevant final pop-up shock. I'd like to see Bava rediscover the direction he seemed to be following then, rather than continue the out-of-control **DEMONS** series, despite their occasional blazes of imagination.

The real inheritor of Bava senior's style, or at least a delirious version of it, is Dario Argento. Of his films, the one that always leaves me stunned is **SUSPIRIA**, particularly in the uncensored version (to the extent of a handful of extra shots, as crucial as those cut from **NEAR DARK** on video) available for a while on video from EMI while the noisy hunt for the uncut **BURNING** was on. It's the most operatic of his films that I've seen, though I find the scene in the underwater room in **INFERNO** at least as haunting. But I think I'm fondest of **DEEP RED**, in the admittedly truncated version available on British video which nevertheless contains shots censored in America, not merely for its shocks but also for Argento's way with an untypically coherent narrative, and in particular for the audacious perceptual trick with which the film displays the crucial clue to the audience.

I used not to like Lucio Fulci, not least because his indifference to narrative construction makes Argento look like John Cleese, but I find I return to some of his films for their brooding atmosphere and, certainly, their outrageous violence. Heaven preserve us from his assertion that the drilling scene in **CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD** was meant as social comment! As graphic Gothic extravaganzas, on the other hand, they stay in the mind, and I was pleased to be able to catch up with the uncensored version of **THE BEYOND**, his most dreamlike film. I have to admit, though, that the zombies would scare me at least as much without the gore they spill.

Fulci's fantasies are about as far as I care to go along with the exhibition of violence for its own sake, and I find the imitation in prose fiction of this trend mindless and boring. I haven't much time for the Italian cannibal movies; I might be able to make allowances for their racism (I have to in some of John Ford's best films, after all) but I can't for the almost obligatory scenes of cruelty to animals. (**CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST** is admittedly ingenious, but I was never one of Ruggero Deodato's admirers: **HOUSE ON THE EDGE OF THE PARK** seems to me to disqualify itself from serious consideration by displaying extreme violence only to ignore its after-effects on the victim). I did see **SALO; THE 120 DAYS OF SODOM** twice, the second time in Greenwich Village where a complete subtitled print was being shown, from which I emerged with a splitting headache from forcing myself not to look away from the last few minutes. All the same, this is one of the films whose discomforting quality I would take to be proof of seriousness, and I write about the film at greater length in the "Penguin Book of Horror and the Supernatural".

And so to **BLACK SUNDAY** again, which resurfaced in a ragged version in Britain in the late sixties as **REVENGE OF THE VAMPIRE** and which was finally shown uncensored by the BBC - more power to them - as **THE MASK OF SATAN**. I think it's one of the great justifications of monochrome as a medium for supernatural horror. Hauntingly beautiful, imaginative and startling as a dream, it remains my favourite Italian horror film. Surely even Barbara Steele must be proud of it. Other Bava films are as remarkable in their own way - the complete **WHIP AND THE BODY** in particular is a luscious Freudian fantasy - and it's about time they could be seen here as Bava made them. How long can the English continue to fend off imagination? I live in hope.

APPENDIX: Original and alternative titles of films mentioned in the text - for reasons of space the list is limited to generic film titles only.

**BARON BLOOD (1972)** - GLI ORRORI DEL CASTELLO DI NORIMBERGA / THE TORTURE CHAMBER OF BARON BLOOD / THE THIRST OF BARON BLOOD / CHAMBER OF TORTURES / THE BLOOD BARON / BARON VAMPIRE

**THE BEYOND (1981)** - L'ALDILA / E TU VIVRAI NE TERROR...L'ALDILA / THE SEVEN DOORS OF DEATH

**BIG JOANNA WITH THE LONG THIGHS (1973)** - GIOVANNONA DALLE COSCELUNGHE

**THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE (1969)** - L'UCCELLO DALLE PLUME DI CRISTALLO / DAS GEWIMNIS DER SCHARZEN WANSCHUNE / THE GALLERY MURDERS / PHANTOM OF TERROR

**BLACK BELLY OF THE TARANTULA (1971)** - UN TARANTOLA DAL VENTRE NERO / LA TARENTULE AU VENTRE NOIR / THE BLACK BELLIED TARANTULA

**BLACK SABBATH (1963)** - I TRE VOLTI DELLA PAURA / LES TROIS VISAGES DE LA PEUR / THE THREE FACES OF FEAR

**BLACK SUNDAY (1960)** - LA MASCHERA DEL DEMONIO / REVENGE OF THE VAMPIRE / THE MASK OF SATAN / THE HOUSE OF FRIGHT / THE HOUR WHEN DRACULA COMES

**BLOOD AND BLACK LACE (1964)** - SEI DONNE PER L'ASSASSINO / BLUT GE SEIDE / SIX FEMMES POUR L'ASSASSIN / FASHION HOUSE OF DEATH / SIX WOMEN FOR THE MURDERER

**BLOODBATH (1971)** - ECOLOGIA DEL DELITTO / ANTEFATTO / BAY OF BLOOD / CARNAGE / TWITCH OF THE DEATH NERVE / LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT PT.2 / REAZIONE A CATENA

**BLOODY MOON (1981)** - DIE SAEGES DES TODES

**THE BRAINIAC (1961)** - EL BARON DEL TERROR

**CALTIKI, THE IMMORTAL MONSTER (1959)** - CALTIKI - IL MOSTRO IMMORTALE

**THE CANNIBALS (1979)** - MONDO CANNIBALI

**CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD (1980)** - PAURA NELLA CITTA DEI MORTI-VIVENTI / LA PAURA / THE GATES OF HELL / TWILIGHT OF THE DEAD

**DEEP RED (1975)** - PROFUNDO ROSSO / THE HATCHET MURDERS / DRIPPING DEEP RED / THE SABRE TOOTH TIGER

**THE DEVIL'S NIGHTMARE (1971)** - LE PLUS LONGUE NUIT DU DIABLE / AU SERVICE DU DIABLE / LA NOTTE PIU LUNGA DEL DIAVOLO / LA TERRIFICANTE NOTTE DEL DIAVOLO / THE DEVIL'S LONGEST NIGHT

**DOCTOR BUTCHER M.D. (1980)** - LA REGINA DEI CANNIBALI / QUEEN OF THE CANNIBALS / ZOMBI HOLOCAUST / ISLAND OF THE LAST ZOMBIES

**DOCTOR JEKYLL AND THE WOLFMAN (1971)** - DOCTOR JEKYLL AND THE WEREWOLF / DOCTOR JEKYLL Y EL HOMBRE LOBO

**DRACULA IN THE PROVINCES (1975)** - IL CAVALIERE COSTANTE NICOSIA DEMONIACO OVVERO DRACULA IN BRIANZA

**EVERYONE DECEASED EXCEPT THE DEAD (1977)** - TUTTI DEFUNTI TRANNE I MORTI

**FOUR TIMES THAT NIGHT (1969 - 1973)** - QUANTE VOLTE...QUELLA NOTTE / HOW MANY TIMES...THAT NIGHT

**GOLIATH AND THE ISLAND OF THE VAMPIRES (1961)** - MACISTE CONTRO IL VAMPIRO / GOLIATH AND THE VAMPIRES / THE VAMPIRES / MACISTE AGAINST THE VAMPIRES / MASCISTE VS THE VAMPIRES

**HOUSE ON THE EDGE OF THE PARK (1981)** - LA CASA SPERDUTA NEL PARCO

**LISA AND THE DEVIL (1972 - 75)** - LISA E IL DIAVOLO / IL DIAVOLO E IL MORTO / EL DIABLO SE LIEVA A LOS MUERTOS / DIE JAGO DER LEBENDEN LEICHEN / LA CASA DELL' ESORCISMO / HOUSE OF EXORCISM / DEVIL IN THE HOUSE OF EXORCISM / THE DEVIL AND THE DEAD

**THE LIVING DEAD AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE (1974)** - NON PROFANAR EL SUENO DE LOS MUERTOS / FIN DE SEMANA PARA LOS MUERTOS / NON SI DEVE PROFANARE IL SONNO DEI MORTI ? BREAKFAST AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE / DON'T OPEN THE WINDOW

**THE LONG HAIR OF DEATH (1964)** - I LUNGHIE CAPELLI DELLA MORTI

**THE NAPLES CONNECTION (1979)** - LUCA IL CONTRABANDIERE

**THE NEW YORK RIPPER (1982)** - LO SQUARTATORE DI NEW YORK / THE RIPPER

**NIGHT OF THE BLOODY APES (1963)** - LA NORRIPALANTE BESTIA HUMANA

**NIGHT OF THE DEVILS (1972)** - LA NOTTE DEI DIAVOLI / LA NOCHE DE LOS DIAVLES

**L'ORRIBILE SEGRETO DEL DOTTOR HICHCOCK (1962)** - RAPTUS / THE TERROR OF DOCTOR HICHCOCK / THE SECRET OF DOCTOR HICHCOCK / THE HORRIBLE DOCTOR HICHCOCK

**SHOCK (1977)** - SHOCK (TRANSFERT - SUSPENCE - HYPNOS) / BEYOND THE DOOR 2

**SISTER EMMANUELLE (1977)** - SUOR EMMANUELLE

**THE SPECTRE (1963)** - LO SPETTRO / LO SPETTRO DEL DR HITCHCOCK / THE GHOST

**SS EXPERIMENT CAMP (1976)** - LAGER SADI KASTRAT KOMMANDANTUR / SS EXPERIMENTAL LOVE CAMP

**STRIP NUDE FOR YOUR KILLER (1975)** - NUDE PER L'ASSASSINO

**TOMBS OF THE BLIND DEAD (1972)** - LA NOCHE DEL TERROR CIEGO / LA NOCHE DE LA MUERTA CIEGA / CRYPT OF THE BLIND DEAD / NIGHT OF THE BLIND DEAD / THE BLIND DEAD

**TORSO (1973)** - I CORPI PRESENTANO TRACCE DI VIOLENZA CARNALE / THE BODIES BEAR TRACES OF CARNAL VIOLENCE

**WEREWOLF SHADOW (1970)** - LA NOCHE DE WALPURGIS / SHADOW OF THE WEREWOLF / WEREWOLF VS THE VAMPIRE WOMEN / NACHT DER VAMPIRE / BLACK HARVEST OF COUNTESS DRACULA

**WHIP AND THE BODY (1963)** - LA FRUSTA E IL CORPO / THE WHIP AND THE FLESH / INCUBO / WHAT! / THE WAY AND THE BODY / NIGHT IS THE PHANTOM



# THE NO-MUPPET SHOW!

## MICHELE SOAVI on Art, Religion and Compulsory Rubber Monsters

**Introduction:** Michele Soavi is 32, and the director of two features - 1987's **STAGEFRIGHT** and the recently completed **LA CHIESA / THE CHURCH**, which despite being one of the best Italian horror films for some time, has yet to receive a distribution deal in either the USA or Britain. He rose to prominence as Dario Argento's assistant director on **TENEBRAE** and **PHENOMENA**, which led to him directing the documentary film **DARIO ARGENTO'S WORLD OF HORROR**. He has acted in movies by directors like Fulci and Deodato, and has therefore learned his craft on both sides of the camera, advancing rapidly from the skillful, if occasionally too Argento-derivative **STAGEFRIGHT** to the far more impressively sombre **LA CHIESA**, where he demonstrates a genuinely individual identity.

Mark Ashworth talked to Soavi during his recent visit to the U.K. to accompany the screening of his original Italian language print of **LA CHIESA** at the recent "Shock Around The Clock III" film festival. He found him to be a thoughtful and very charming man, whose self-effacing manner belies his growing stature as Italy's most accomplished new genre director.

S. T.

**EYE:** Visually, **LA CHIESA** seems to have been influenced by the work of artists like Bosch and Goya. Was this a conscious decision?

**MS:** Of course, yes. I looked at the work of Bosch, the representations of Dante's "Inferno" by Dore. The painting that (Barbara) Cupisti is restoring is a real painting from San Germiniano. It's by a painter of the second century. I tried to give everything a realistic iconography because I wanted to make the film's imagery authentic.

**EYE:** The Devil in **LA CHIESA** was a very classical representation...

**MS:** Yes - after all, the iconography of the Devil is very consistent.

**EYE:** Tell us something about the inception of the project.

**MS:** Well, unfortunately, this film **LA CHIESA** collapsed in on my head, because first of all Lamberto Bava was going to do **DEMONS III**; there was a script there, but then he had the chance to work as producer and director on a TV series. Dario, who as you know was producing, needed a director and he called me. We had only one month to change the script and build **LA CHIESA**. I'd never worked with this culture before, the evil things, the Gothic cathedral and all those things, so I read a lot of books in a very short time. On the other hand, it's not so hard, because it's all part of my cultural background as a European.

**EYE:** Catholic?

**MS:** No...I'm not exactly a Catholic, I'm Christian...I don't go to church every Sunday. I mean, **STAGEFRIGHT** was perhaps more similar to my world because I was an actor, and describing the theatrical life and the actor's company is more, you know, in my skin. The church is in my skin also, but as a tradition.

**EYE:** Parts of **LA CHIESA** reminded me of Pupi Avati's **HOUSE WITH THE WINDOWS THAT LAUGH...**

**MS:** I've seen it once, I think. But there are a lot of films in there, a lot of things obviously that I like. You don't put things in that you don't like! So in **LA CHIESA**, there is this story of a man who discovers a pit under the church...here, I was dealing with the unknown, the Devil. It is very, very difficult to represent the Devil - if you see it, you're not scared of it anymore - it's a puppet, it's a special effect, and you lose a lot of tension. You know it's only a Sergio Stivaletti creation! The fantasy is much stronger when the audience can put in their own fears. But you have to accept this compromise because Dario Argento productions are always the type of films that need special effects. So I accept this, so as to do a bit of my film and a bit of Dario's film. It's like a sculpture, but maybe the first part works better than the second. Because you have perhaps too many characters and in the second half you lose the main characters; this is perhaps why the tension goes up and

down. In **LA CHIESA**, I'm concerned with showing the conflict between the white and the black sides of the soul, and the struggle to keep the balance between them. It's a kind of karma, and when the pendulum goes on the black side all the fears the characters have in their lives materialise. That's what I'm trying to do - sometimes it works, sometimes it's not understandable. I've tried to include something readable *underneath* the film, that has logic. Like the wedding thing - you know, it's a trap.

**EYE:** I found **LA CHIESA** very emotional and, in parts, very sexy...

**MS:** Yeah? What kind of sexy?

**EYE:** Well, I mean...Argento's films are very structured, very beautiful, but very, very cold - the surface is very hard...

**MS:** Yes, like ice...

**EYE:** ...but your films, particularly **LA CHIESA**, have quite an organic feel. Even **STAGEFRIGHT** which is quite a clinical film...

**MS:** It is very clean and compact.

**EYE:** ...has quite a lot of sexual tension.

**MS:** Yes - I acted for four years and I know what an actor is like inside, so I was trying to create a kind of dialogue with them. The problem is that many horror directors use actors like...just bodies. I'm not saying I'm a good director of actors, but I *try* to get actors to participate and give more of what they feel.

**EYE:** You've acted in some very strange films, such as Joe D'Amato's **CALIGULA-THE UNTOLD STORY...**

**MS:** I was an actor in there...it was a very small job. Also, I was assistant director.

**EYE:** And you were also in Deodato's **THE ATLANTIS INTERCEPTORS** - did you work as assistant director on many other films?

**MS:** Not really. What happened often, was like in Fulci's **CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD**, which they shot in the USA in 1980. I was there for fifteen days, but I only had acting work for five, so for the other days I was very bored. I was very interested in working with the crew, so I asked Fulci and was allowed to help with the grip - this was my first experience of this double role of actor and crew-member. **THE ATLANTIS INTERCEPTORS** was the same. I went to the Philippines for three weeks but only acted for ten days. Ruggero is a friend of mine, so I just helped out for free. (if he was to try this in Britain, the bloody unions would crucify him, of course! - ed.). After that, my career as an assistant director grew, but my acting dropped off. I can always choose myself now, of course!

**EYE:** How did you enjoy working on Terry Gilliam's **BARON MUNCHAUSEN**?

**MS:** Well, I really like **BRAZIL**, I find it extraordinary, very violent and dramatic - and also very scary, even though it's not a horror film. It's about the horror of your self and the world you live in, the social mechanism, the machine, and about alienation - that is very horrible. **BARON MUNCHAUSEN** was quite an experience, because I'd never worked on a film with a budget like that before. I did a lot of things for Terry Gilliam - it's difficult making scenes for another director, and many nights I couldn't sleep for wondering if they would be what he wanted. Working with such a huge budget makes you more distant from the actual film, and doing a simple scene that would normally take five minutes takes years! I think it's better to have a low budget and compact story.

**EYE:** What are your plans for your next work?

**MS:** My next film will be another Dario Argento production. I've signed a contract to do another one. I have more time now to see to the next story, which I want to be very solid - horrific, shocking and very dramatic. But always with realism - I believe you can be visionary within a realistic situation and not have to fall back on special effects. Italian movies, I think it's fair to say, couldn't care less about the script, and now they're following the American system, like sheep. The Americans do special effects



with millions of dollars, and in Italy they want to do the same with, like, five thousand *lira*! I think this is one of the very bad things about movies now. Italian movies have a very good tradition of making simple scenes into artistic scenes. You can make many, many effects which aren't just muppets, interesting visual effects. Nowadays, it's like, 'Sergio Stivaletti is there, he's not working, so let's build some muppets for the movie', even though they're not in the script!

**EYE:** The cogs and wheels beneath the church, for example, are far more stunning than the monsters...

**MS:** The mechanism, yeah, and also one scene I really like is where the huge cross collapses and sets everything in motion. In the original script, after that scene, when Thomas Arana got possessed, he became a monster but I chose to find him the morning after looking completely normal instead.

**EYE:** Another impressive shot comes near the end - the long, slow track through the vault. I thought that was wonderful...

**MS:** Really? The simple things are always the best. It's like the shot near the beginning which starts in the Middle Ages but finishes in our time. It was done in three separate shots, with the momentary black-outs masking the cuts.

**EYE:** Your use of things like long dolly and tracking shots reminded me a lot of '60's horrors like Margheriti's *LONG HAIR OF DEATH*. The only thing missing was the zooms.

**MS:** I hate zooms! To over-use the zoom is horrible - the film becomes shit ("now just a moment...!" - Jesus Franco). You should only have one or two in a film; slow ones like tracking shots, perhaps.

**EYE:** Do you feel that if you simply cut to shot, the film becomes more anonymous, more Americanized?

**MS:** You're right. Moving the camera a lot creates problems with things like lighting, but it's worth it. I don't like 'video clip'-style editing. I like long shots that create tension. I hate TV as well...if Cronenberg hadn't had the idea to make a film about television, I would have liked to have done it - it was a very ancient idea I had.

**EYE:** Did you do much research for the witchcraft angle in *LA CHIESA*?

**MS:** Yes, it was very useful to do so. I looked into the superstition surrounding it. *LA CHIESA* starts with superstition - you have these Teutonic Knights who are slaves of the church, they see demons everywhere, witches in everybody. So they go into this

little village and massacre everybody just because of some stupid priest! When I was shooting, I was thinking of him as the Devil, the black priest was the real Devil. So the knights misunderstood everything. In the original script, the Teutonic Knights were positive, and all the people in the village were villains, all *raaarrrgh!* (pulls twisted expression). I found that very, very stupid. So I made the 'witch' very young and pretty - I mean, she *could* be a witch, but she's not, but *they* think she is. They kill everybody, you know, like the SS.

**EYE:** How do you feel about the ending of *LA CHIESA*? I found it confusing...

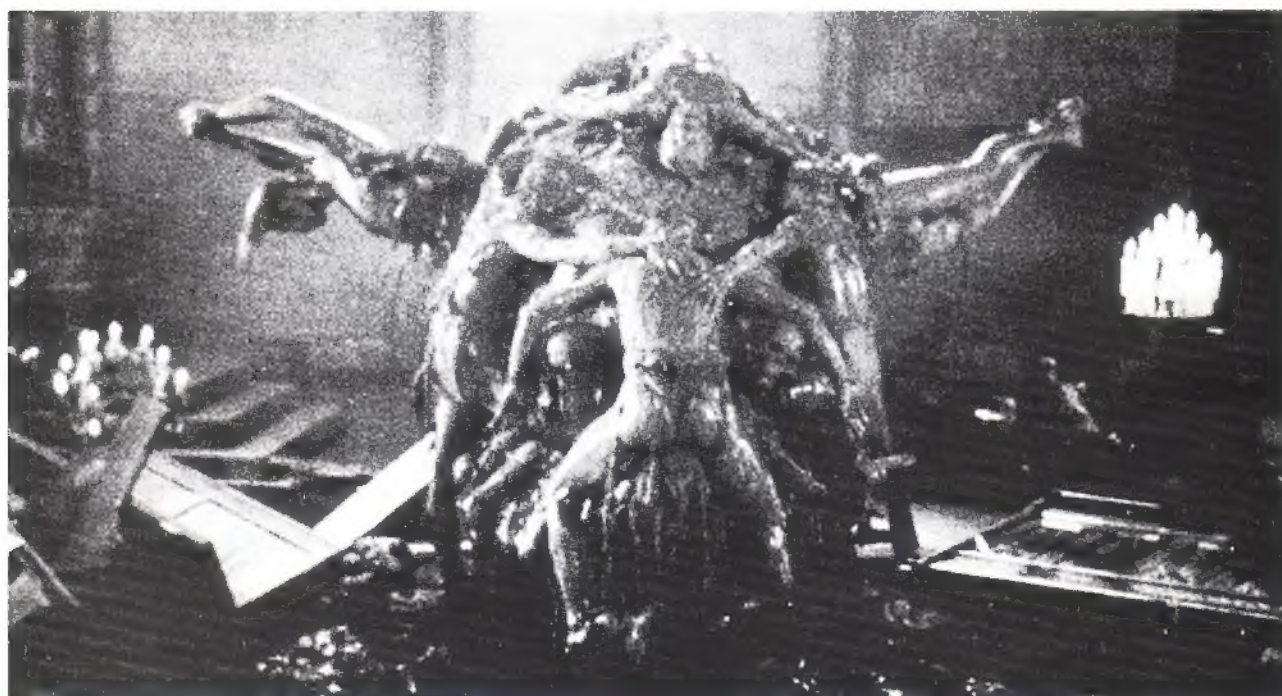
**MS:** It is! Maybe I shouldn't say this, but when we shot the film we didn't know how to end it. The church collapses, but we had to have something else for the end, another surprise. We found a ruined church in Hamburg which matched ours, for the scenes showing it surrounded by offices and busy roads...at the end of it all, she has a vision which is like our world reversed, when she finds the stone-carved face that covered the hole. In fact the idea I had for the next film is connected to that - it's all about holes.

**EYE:** Apart from the confusing ending though, I loved *LA CHIESA* very much indeed. I thought you captured the heavy, oppressive atmosphere of the ritual aspect of religion very accurately...

**MS:** Yeah - I cut a lot of scenes like that from *LA CHIESA*, though. The film was maybe 15 or 20 minutes longer - we screened it for Dario and he said "Boring", and we took it out. (note: the version screened at the *SHOCK...* festival contained several scenes deleted from the 'official' version - ed.). But anyway, I think in the end there was a good compromise between me and him.

**EYE:** How do you feel about *LA CHIESA* being promoted as a Dario Argento film?

**MS:** I am a bit angry - in Italy the poster says "Dario Argento presents *LA CHIESA*", then there are the names of the actors and "directed by Michele Soavi" in tiny print. Obviously, I am not happy about that. Dario is a director himself though, and obviously I had to accept some compromise. I was after all working from his brief. I don't want to do "Dario Argento Productions" for the rest of my life, but anyway, he told me next time I'll have more freedom. So, maybe next time I'll be able to do more of what I want.



A scene from *LA CHIESA*



# PAINTER OF AGONIES

# TWO FILMS BY PUPI AVATI.

## LA CASA DALLE FINESTRE CHE RIDONO

aka THE HOUSE WITH THE WINDOWS THAT LAUGH

**Directed by Pupi Avati.** Script by Pupi Avati, Gianna Cavina, Maurizio Constanzo, Antonio Avati. Photographed by Pasquale Rachini. Edited by Giuseppe Baghdighian. Design and costumes by Luciana Morosetti. Make-up by Giovanni Amedei. Music by Amadeo Tommasi. Produced by Gianni Minervini and Antonio Avati for A.M.A. Film. Italy 1976. (scope)

**Cast:** Lino Capolicchio, Francesca Marciano, Gianni Cavina, Giulio Pizzirani, Vanna Busoni, Andrea Matteuzzi, Bob Tonelli, Pietro Brambilla, Ferdinando Orlandi, Ines Ciaschetti, Carla Astolfi.

Although little known outside Italy, Pupi Avati is one of the most talented directors working in European cinema today. Over the past two decades he has applied his unique, perversely sentimental vision to a wide range of film genres including musical fantasies like **DANCING PARADISE** and dramas like **LAST MINUTE**. Freely admitting to being both fascinated and terrified by the world of ghosts and spirits, Avati invests many of his films with a strong sense of the mysterious. In a work like **EVERYONE DECEASED EXCEPT THE DEAD**, he takes a farcical approach to the supernatural, using an ancient family curse as the background to a "Ten Little Indians" style black comedy. Even his more straightforward pictures, **JAZZ BAND** for example, are underscored by his love for magic and things beyond the confines of everyday existence. **THE HOUSE WITH THE WINDOWS THAT LAUGH**, however, shows Avati exploring areas far more sinister than those covered by the main body of his work.

As in practically all of Avati's films, the action takes place in his native Emilia Romagna, a region of Northern Italy: in this case the flat marshy land of the Po Valley around Ferrara. Bruno Ligniani, the central character, has already been dead for twenty years when the story begins. Known as "The Painter of Agonies", he was obsessed with finding a way of painting which accurately reproduced the moments of suffering before death. For Ligniani, a man was only 'pure' when dying, and through depicting death, he himself felt more alive. A young painter, Stefano (Capolicchio), travels to a small village to restore a fresco which Ligniani had painted on the wall of the local church. The fresco is a graphic depiction of St. Sebastian being tortured to death by two figures, and the village priest tells Stefano that he does not care whether it is restored or not because he hates it. Antonio, a friend of Stefano's who came to the village to recover from a nervous breakdown, reveals that he has discovered a strange story about

the area, and promises to take him to "the house with the windows that laugh". That night, Antonio is killed in mysterious circumstances. When Stefano returns to his hotel, he receives a threatening phonecall from someone warning him not to touch the painting because "he likes it the way it is..." The hotel proprietor who was listening in on the call, asks Stefano to leave. The village idiot takes him to the house of an old paralytic who invites him to stay, but the house also has another unseen occupant. As more pieces of the puzzle fit together, Stefano finally learns the horrible truth. The painter's two sisters would find dead bodies for him to paint, but when there were none available, they tortured and killed young men themselves whilst their depraved brother reproduced their activities on canvas. They disposed of the bodies by burying them behind their then home - a small house with grotesque laughing mouths painted over the windows. Stefano discovers the sisters are still alive, one being his supposedly paralysed landlady. They have kept up their sadistic practises, offering their victims as sacrifices to Ligniani's corpse which is preserved in a vat of formaldehyde in the attic. Stefano escapes to the church, and finds to his horror that the village priest holds the final key to the bizarre mystery!

Despite taking time out to detail the developing romance between Stefano and the local schoolteacher (Marciano), Avati tells his story with exceptional skill and control, creating a stifling atmosphere of morbidity and horror. The details about Ligniani's incestuous relationship with his sisters, his violent suicide when he discovered he had syphilis, and the priest's tale of how the church was used by the Nazis as a storehouse for corpses all add to the oppressive feelings of degeneracy and madness. In one memorably chilling scene, the village idiot tells Stefano he has hidden a rat in Antonio's coffin "to keep the corpse company!" Avati's piece-de-resistance however, is the idiot's death at the hands of the two demented women. Stripped, and with his hands bound above him, he is repeatedly stabbed by the cackling sisters. Nearby stands the tank containing their brother's corpse, whilst an old tape recorder plays his feverish ramblings: "...my colours enter his skin and infect the victim through his eyes...keep him still! Keep him still!" Rachini's immaculately stylish, unfussy camerawork documents all this with an unsettling coolness which greatly increases the emotional impact of the horrors. Avati's use of lighting is also extremely impressive, with many scenes resembling Italian religious paintings. An excellent example of this is the sequence in which a character recalls Ligniani sketching his dying mother: a small boy enters a room filled with white light as white-clad women busily prepare sheets and towels. The painter sits obsessively drawing, in sharp relief against this bright background. In the latter portion of the film, several scenes take place in isolated pools of light, and the bright sunshine of the picture's opening is replaced by heavy overcast skies.

Like Fellini (also from Emilia Romagna), Avati is very much 'in touch' with the land, and the psychology of his characters is brilliantly observed. He is greatly assisted by uniformly excellent performances from his repertory cast and his insistence on absolutely authentic language. The 'outsiders' speak standard Italian, while the rest of the cast speak with heavy Romagnan accents. One of the first clues to the identity of Ligniani's sisters comes when the paralysed woman sings an old Portuguese love song: the painter and his family had spent part of their early lives in Brazil. The film's dependence on these authenticities is probably the reason it has never seen an overseas release - it would be impossible to dub, and unfortunately, distributors do not seem to credit horror fans with the intelligence to accept subtitles.

The movie is also blessed with one of the most eerily appropriate music scores ever, and has probably the best title sequence since Mario Bava's **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE**. At one point a character comments, "Only a really great artist could have given such an expression to death." I couldn't have put it better myself.





## ZEDER

aka ZEDER (VOICES FROM THE BEYOND)/REVENGE OF THE DEAD

**Directed by Pupi Avati.** Screenplay by Avati, Maurizio Constanzo, Antonio Avati. Photographed by Franco delli Colli. Edited by Amedeo Salfa. Sets by Giancarlo Basili, Leonardo Scarpa. Costumes by Steno Tonelli. Music by Riz Ortolani. Produced by Gianni Minervini and Antonio Avati for A.M.A. Film s.r.l./RAI - Channel 2 TV. Italy 1983. Technovision. Telecolor.

**Cast:** Gabriele Lavia, Anne Canovas, Paola Tanziani, Cesare Barbetti, John Stacy, Enea Ferrario, Marcello Tusco, Ferdinando Orlandi, Bob Tonelli, Alessandro Partexano, Aldo Sassi, Maria Teresa Toffano, Adolfo Belletti, Veronica Moriconi.

Chartres, France. 1956: Using a young girl, Gabriella, as a medium, Dr Meyer (Barbetti) is investigating a violent haunting at an isolated old house. In the cellar he discovers the remains of a 19th. century scholar named Paolo Zeder, "someone who just disappeared into thin air". Zeder had been researching into what he called "K-Zones" - areas which apparently exist out of time, and where it is possible for the dead to return from the hereafter. Meyer realises that he has stumbled across just such a place...

Bologna, Italy. The present: Stefano (Lavia), an unsuccessful novelist, is given a second-hand typewriter by his wife Alessandra (Canovas). From the used ribbon, he manages to decipher some curious phrases that initially intrigue, then disturb him. At the university he shows his findings to Professor Chesi (Stacy) who explains about Zeder and his bizarre theories. With the help of a police-officer friend, Stefano finds out that the typewriter belonged to a de-frocked priest named Luigi Costa who died of lung cancer a few months earlier. It turns out that Italy has a "K-Zone" located at a disused holiday camp in the coastal town of Spina. Here in the utmost secrecy, a team of scientists led by Dr Meyer and Gabriella (Tanziani) are trying to resurrect Costa. Having made this discovery, Stefano and his wife find their lives threatened by this sinister organisation, which also involves their friends Professor Chesi and Dr Melis (Tusco). After a succession of inexplicable disappearances and gruesome deaths, the couple finally witness the terrifying re-awakening of the malignant priest, who brutally kills those responsible for his return from the dead. Alessandra also becomes a victim of the tragic experiment. Stefano buries her body in the grounds of the camp and sits down to wait...

This beautifully stylish TV movie marks Avati's welcome (though sadly brief) return to the horror genre. Understandably, his approach to the living dead has more in common with Val Lewton's early forties mood pieces than with Fulci's grisly epics, but as in *THE HOUSE WITH THE WINDOWS THAT LAUGH*



*A Professional of the Supernatural?*

he does include a particularly graphic stabbing. The screenplay, which includes contributions from the excellent TV presenter Constanzo, once again testifies to Avati's exemplary storytelling skill. The emphasis is firmly on the dialogue, but thanks to some remarkably well-chosen imagery, he manages to infuse the film with a mounting sense of panic. One of the surreal highlights of the more leisurely paced *THE HOUSE...* was an interior shot of an old fridge infested with snails. In *ZEDER*, Avati achieves a superbly nightmarish effect with a coffin full of frantically flapping birds. He also extends his pre-occupation with the more sinister aspects of religion, even to the extent of having the clergy describe themselves as "professionals of the supernatural"! It is interesting to note, however, that the church cannot offer solutions to Avati's heroes, and especially in the case of *THE HOUSE...*, functions merely as a cover for degeneration. The soul is an important concept in the Catholic faith and *ZEDER* documents the return of the souls of the dead through the alchemical properties of the "K-Zones". But the spirits of the dead can only return to destroy the flesh of the living, as Stefano discovers to his cost when he embraces his resurrected wife at the end of the picture. Mixing this morbid theme with cold, scientific fact, Avati creates a strikingly oppressive atmosphere of suspense.

From a purely visual point of view, the film benefits from an intelligent use of the expected Emilia-Romagna locations. The Bolognese Avati's love of his native region is well-known, and here he manages to include some fascinating local landmarks like the Etruscan necropolis at Spina into the story. The huge skeletal wreck of the abandoned holiday camp is especially impressive, with delli Colli's handsome camerawork making the most of its shadowy recesses and bizarre design. Avati is also well served by his favourite composer Riz Ortolani. Here he reprises some of the themes from his brilliant score for Deodato's infamous *CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST*, and complements delli Colli's depiction of the flat landscape with bleak synthesizer tones. Ortolani has won several awards for his work with Avati, and his best score for the director is from *A SCHOOL OUTING*, a classy comedy set in the Bologna of 1914.

Although *ZEDER* is studded with accomplished performances from Avati regulars like Orlandi, Tonelli and Barbetti, it's one weak link is its star, Gabriele Lavia. Considering that in *BORDELLA* and *CHRISTMAS PRESENT* Avati had even coaxed good performances from Joe D'Amato regular George Eastman, it seems odd that he cannot do much with someone like Lavia, who has had extensive theatrical experience. However, it will be apparent to anyone who has suffered through Lavia's three self-directed features, in which he and his wife, the equally egocentric Monica Guerritore, rant and pose like there's no tomorrow, that his furrow-browed narcissism is perhaps too overpowering. Significantly, Lavia's best work is for directors like Argento and Damiani - he'd probably met his match!

Since *ZEDER*, Avati has not gone back to the macabre. He has been quoted as saying he's afraid to do an all-out horror project, and his recent work is as far removed from the genre as one could get. He has made several comedies like *FESTA DI LAUREA* and the anthology film *MARRIAGES*, as well as the football drama *LAST MINUTE*. His latest project, *BOYS AND GIRLS* is a black and white film about the marriage of an upper-class boy to a lower-class girl in the 1930's. We can only hope that he will eventually summon up the courage to return to horror, and do something to raise the standards of Italy's rapidly declining output.

Mark Ashworth.



**NIGHT TRAIN MURDERS**

aka L'ULTIMO TRENO DELLA NOTTE/ NEW HOUSE ON THE LEFT/ LATE NIGHT TRAINS/ DON'T RIDE ON LATE NIGHT TRAINS

**Directed by Aldo Lado.** Director of photography - Gabor Pogany. Music by Ennio Morricone. Set design by Franco Bottari. Executive producers - Pino Buricchi and Paolo Infascelli. Title song "A Flower's All You Need" by Demis Roussos. A European Inc. Production, Italy 1975

**Cast:** Flavio Bucci, Macha Meril, Gianfranco de Grassi, Enrico Maria Salerno, Franco Fabrizi, Marina Berti, Irene Miracle, Laura d'Angelo.

It's a common trait in the Italian film industry to take a popular American movie and churn out rough approximations of it designed to tap into the lucrative market opened by its success. Quite often the resulting films are considerably more interesting than the overblown models they borrow from. In this instance, Aldo Lado's amendments to the source material, namely Wes Craven's **LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT** are overtly critical of Craven's film, chiefly its use of class divisions to delineate the conflicts between characters.



Macha - Posh or what?

It's Christmas Eve. As the credits roll we see two young thugs (Bucci and de Grassi) viciously mug a department store Santa, whilst on the soundtrack the appalling Demis Roussos of all people keeps anticipation at a bare minimum. At the station, two teenage girls (D'Angelo and Miracle) board a train to Italy, anxious to arrive back home for Christmas Day, as arranged. Also boarding the train are the two youths, who catch it to evade the police. An affluent, well-dressed woman in her late thirties wearing a tasteful black-veiled hat (Meril) sits alone. She seems well-educated, wealthy, sophisticated. During the journey, Meril enters the toilet compartment and is unable to prevent Bucci from suddenly forcing entry too. After a desultory objection, she engages in luridly passionate sex with the intruder. The two youths, with Meril observing, harass the passengers and briefly try to seduce the girls, who are first amused, then unnerved by their antics. Later, when their train is delayed, the girls change to another at an isolated border station. It is dimly lit and appears virtually empty. For a while they are happy, believing they have left the violent thugs behind. They celebrate the arrival of Christmas Day with a small midnight dinner. Too late they realize that Bucci, de Grassi and Meril have also boarded the late-night train, and before they can look for help they are trapped in their compartment. Goaded and encouraged by the sadistic Meril, the youths humiliate, torture and rape both girls. D'Angelo, a virgin, is accidentally killed when the knife with which de Grassi deflowers her slips due to the sudden jerking of the train. Miracle tries to jump from the toilet window, hurling herself from the speeding

train to her death on the rocks below. The killers have stolen their victims rail tickets and are forced by the eventual arrival of the guard to disembark next morning at the station where Miracle's parents (Salerno and Berti) are waiting for their daughter and her friend. A rather contrived set of circumstances have the three sadists ending up at the parents' plush home, where the anxious couple's suspicions are confirmed by a news report announcing the discovery of the girls' bodies. The father attacks and kills de Grassi and Bucci. Meril saves her own skin at the last minute by persuading the parents that she was no more than a helpless onlooker held hostage by two vicious maniacs. As the police arrive at the scene, she quietly stands back and pulls the black veil of her expensive hat over her downcast eyes.

As can be seen by the above synopsis, there are several differences to **LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT** which Lado has seen fit to introduce. The chief failing of Craven's film is its concealed puritanism, despite its general sleaziness and occasional mild satire of the middle-class family. In **NIGHT TRAIN MURDERS**, the murder of the two girls takes place on a train as they hurry to get back in time for Christmas with their parents; the murders take place on Christmas Day. Craven's victims are abducted whilst trying to (tut tut!) score some grass on their way to a rock concert. In **LAST HOUSE...**'s advertising campaign, a poster asserted that "parents who have taken their daughters to see this film...regard this movie as a perfect deterrent to *this sort of behaviour*" (my italics). Directors might claim that the ravings of a film's promoters, particularly in the exploitation field, should not be assumed to tally with the director's own feelings about his work, but Craven has done enough blathering about his movie's anti-violence 'message' and cultivated such a responsible 'thinking man' image for himself that he can hardly expect to avoid being held accountable for such ridiculous promotional rot.

Another point of contention is evident when comparing the final sequences. In both the distraught parents wreak a prolonged and violent revenge against their daughter's murderers. At the end of **LAST HOUSE...**, the exhausted couple are shown amidst the gore-streaked wreckage of their sitting room. They seem sickened by their actions, and the condemnatory presence of the police, having arrived just in time to shriek "For God's sake, Doc, no!" as the father finishes off Krug with a chainsaw, adds a 'necessary' reminder of social unacceptability to his revenge. The movie ends on a freeze-frame of the father's haggard face. In the equivalent scene in **THE NIGHT TRAIN MURDERS** the father is shown lifting a rifle to the killer's head and preparing to shoot. When his wife runs up to him and cries "Hasn't there been enough violence?!", echoing Craven's argument, he pauses for a couple of seconds and reflects - then re-shoulders his gun and blasts the killer's brains out. The answer, delivered resoundingly, is 'No!' A typically Italian response of course, revenge being one of their strong suits, but how much more honest and refreshing than the guilt-wracked liberalism of the American film! It's pertinent to mention that the Craven film precedes its abject moralizing by showing the parents' complicated and ingenious revenge, involving a series of booby-traps. These extended scenes use traditional means of generating suspense, and whip up the audience's thirst for the execution of the parents' elaborate plan. To then snub this audience anticipation with such hypocritical moral wrist-slapping is clearly not on. Lado's film allows the enraged father his reason for killing his daughter's assailants, and allows the audience to share his satisfaction. Not exactly liberal of course, but at least it's not ashamed of itself.

More than anything else though, it's Macha Meril's character who really carries the film. She contributes an icily impressive performance which at times reminded me of the Sadean whores who serve as storytellers in Pasolini's **SALO; THE 120 DAYS OF SODOM**. She seems so adept at portraying the combination of elegance and amorality that it's difficult to believe that this is the same actress who appears from time to time in such up-market



## REVIEWS:

art-house films as Godard's **A MARRIED WOMAN**, Agnes Varda's **VAGABONDE** and Fassbinder's brilliant **CHINESE ROULETTE**. She is also at the centre of Lado's most interesting amendment to Craven. In **LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT** there is a conscious, very deliberate class division between the psychotic killers and the hapless victims. Krug's band of reprobates include a child-molester, a lesbian (!) and a heroin addict. He himself was convicted for the crime of slaying a priest and two nuns! The 'good-guys' are a middle-class, middle-aged doctor (ex-services) and his wise-cracking drudge of a wife. When their daughter spurns the safety of the family circle and hangs around with 'bad' girl Phyllis Stone (poor family, petty criminal, sexually precocious) her fate is already sealed. Despite the ironies created by the role reversal through which the plot puts the two sides, the basic division is uncomplicated by any considerations of class prejudice. In Aldo Lado's simple but effective twist, the rapes and murders are committed by two 'lower class' types, but the presence and influence of Meril acts as catalyst to their excesses. Although she is clearly of high intelligence and high income, her respectable appearance is a mask behind which a cold-hearted and vicious libertine lies. To make the point even more incisive, Meril's facade is enough to fool the vengeful parents into sparing her life - her well-bred manner and dress make her tearful protestations of innocence plausible to them. In the end, whilst the two louts are killed, she gets off scot-free.

It has to be said that despite being a more honest film than its model **NIGHT TRAIN MURDERS** never achieves the raw power of the first half of Craven's infamous debut. Lacking the sub-cinema verite graininess and hard-edged performances that **LAST HOUSE...** boasts, it adopts instead clear, lucid photography and carefully choreographed camera movement. Performances are prevented from achieving the realism one might have wished for by the inevitable distancing which dubbing creates and with the exception of Meril, no-one really stands out. As the more verbal of the two youths, Flavio Bucci (best known for his part as the blind pianist in Argento's marvellous **SUSPIRIA**) passes muster, but has to rely on his unusually warped face to carry off the part. The girls are particularly characterless, and a lot of the potential impact of the scenes depicting their torments is lost as a result. On the other hand, a measure of eccentric colour is afforded by the array of bizarre fellow travellers on the first train. A carriage full of cheerfully drunken German pensioners bawling old army songs turn suddenly unpleasant when interrupted by Bucci, and respond to his facetious Nazi salute with a mass "Sieg Heil!". Elsewhere, a withered old priest winks lasciviously at an uncomfortable young man opposite; another priest next to him leans forward and whispers that the old man merely has a nervous twitch. Nonetheless, the priest's continued winking seems decidedly un-Christian! In both cases these incidental vignettes serve to further underline the theme of respectable appearances masking corruption and hypocrisy. The whole thing is aided considerably by the sparse but highly effective Ennio Morricone score, which revolves around an ominous harmonica refrain.

Lado's movies are difficult to see, but amongst them only his debut **SHORT NIGHT OF THE GLASS DOLLS/LA CORTA NOTTE DELLE BAMBOLE DI VETRO**, reputed to have had a very brief early seventies release in the U.K. as **BUTTERFLY OF NIGHT**, seems likely to equal the high standard of **THE NIGHT TRAIN MURDERS**. A semi-sequel entitled **TERROR** starring Florinda Bolkan and Ray Lovelock was made but is unlikely to have any but the most remote of similarities to Lado's movie. If the degree of thoughtfulness shown in his handling of the 'borrowed' material here is borne out elsewhere in his work, his other movies would seem essential viewing.

Stephen Thrower.

## BEAST IN HEAT : HORRIFYING EXPERIMENTS OF S. S. LAST DAYS

aka NAZI HOLOCAUST

Directed by Ivan Katansky

An Eterna Film Production

Cast: Macha Magall, John Braun, Kim Gatti, Sal Boris

Like Marino Girolami's **DR. BUTCHER M. D.**, this is a disjointed, out-of-whack mess, and on first viewing one could be forgiven for thinking that two completely different films had been spliced together. In this case a ropery 'partisan rebels vs the Nazis' war movie bristling with look-a-like nobodies trying to pass themselves off as Charles Bronson, Richard Chamberlain and the like is punctuated with the regally fiendish Ms. Magall strutting around a grubby little torture chamber firing off priceless rounds of dialogue whilst a fat hairy mongoloid in a cage 'rapes' a series of naked women to death. The result is a hysterically tasteless piece of garbage which veers between dull stupidity and absurd misogyny leavened by the Nazis' maniacal good cheer as they devise ways of dragging information out of the boring locals. As exploitation stalwarts may already have guessed, the duff war movie footage hogs better than half of the running time, but the whole thing perks up considerably whenever Nazi uniformed figures appear. Ms. Magall in collaboration with the unaccountably plummy English bitch who dubbed her, commands the screen whenever she appears. Although her only concession to a German accent is to pronounce swine as *svine*,



*The Beast...*

Macha puts in a performance that lovers of bad lip-sync' will recognise as genius. A waspish, malignant woman, flanked by her two lesbian assistants, she easily overcomes the objections of the Guilt Ridden Doctor and revels in her latest bizarre experiment, typically and brilliantly lacking in the slightest practical value - the creation of a sexually pathologic mutant "who would make the god Eros green with envy". A naked female guinea-pig is comforted with the words "I only want you to experience a moment of intense pleasure!" before being thrown in the cage with the Beast. Anyway, rather than going on in time-honoured Medved fashion to spoil the good dialogue by quoting it all, let's just say that at this stage, as Macha says immediately prior to stock footage of German tanks rolling into Northern Italy - "the fun's just beginning!"

The variety of tortures in evidence is pretty high, but concentrated into three main sequences, so judicious use of the fast forward button is required. But amongst such delights as mongoloid rape, baby shooting, brutal injections, and flagellation of naked fatties are a number of scenes which boggle the imagina-



tion. Take for instance the woman with crocodile-clips on her vagina which lead to a hand-cranked static electricity generator. Or the moment when the retarded beast breaks off from raping one of the chosen virgins to pullout large handfuls of her abundant pubic hair - notable for both the raw, bloody patches left between the victims' legs and the bizarre use to which the mongoloid puts the pubes in question - He eats them! Add to this cinematic first the scene where a woman having her finger-nails pulled out interrupts her screams with the lucidly spoken phrase "You're hurting me!" and you'll have some idea of the subhuman depths to which Ivan Katansky sinks. Those amongst us with a taste for the subhuman depths will of course approve wholeheartedly of his determination to bring such grotesquerie to us. And to think this actually got a UK video release...

Stephen Thrower

## THE BELL OF HELL aka LA CAMPANA DEL INFIERNO

**Directed and produced by Claudio Guerin Hill.** Completed after the director's death by Juan Antonio Bardem. Screenplay by Santiago Moncada. Photographed by Manuel Rojas. Special effects by Manuel Baquero. Produced for Hesperia/Films de la Beotie, Spain 1973 (scope)

**Cast:** Renaud Verley, Viveca Lindfors, Alfredo Mayo, Maribel Martín, Nura Gimeno, Christine Betzner, Saturno Cerra, Nicole Vesperini, Erasmo Pascual, Susana Latour

John (Verley) is being released from the asylum. He is on probation for a few months until his case comes up for reconsideration. He gets on his bike and roars off behind the blood-red credits. As we sit back and wait for the mayhem we get our first surprise. Apart from the credits saying it's a Spanish/French co-production, a tramp who must have accidentally wandered off a Fulci set talks of "fig trees uprooted from their graves", "bones snatched from a bitch in heat", and warns us "the dead will rise" as we cut to shots of a lorry taking a huge bell to the local church. Then back to the motorcycle. Children sing "Freres-Jacques" on the soundtrack as John arrives at a dark, brooding and deserted house. He flicks through a photograph album of happy childhood days presented like a Garden of Eden before the Fall, and then stares out at the rain.

These contradictory opening images pre-figure the dual nature of a film that combines elements of the atmospheric Spanish and Italian films of the sixties with the gore, nudity and S & M of the late seventies. Caught, you might say, between the demise of Hammer and the rise of the Cannibals. But what really pulls you in is the oppressive Gothic atmosphere and strong plot which, like the opening, constantly has you guessing.

John wants revenge. He was committed to the asylum by his wheel-chair bound aunt (Lindfors), as a way of beating him to the inheritance left after his unmarried mother's suicide. The aunt, possibly with the help of her three nubile daughters, naturally wants him re-admitted. While she bribes the doctor, he gets a job in a slaughter-house, giving you everything you have come to expect from such scenes, and begins to construct one in his cellar. When he has learnt enough he leaves and moves on to playing nasty practical jokes on people.

Little as it seems in what is essentially a claustrophobic, incestuous family story. There are brilliantly lit yet shadowy interiors in rich tonal colours. Visual symbolism abounds, with

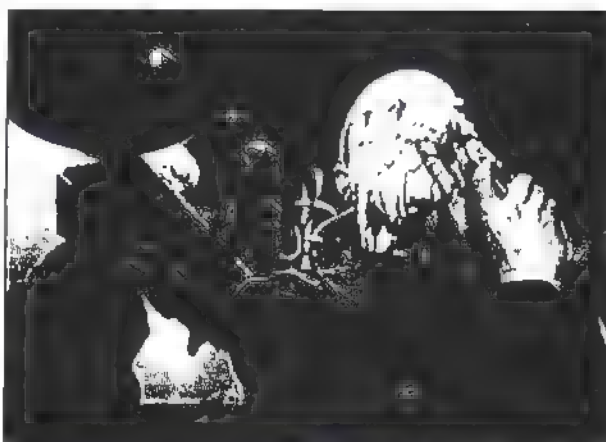
subtle nuances and ambiguity pervading everywhere amidst a web of repressed sexuality. Half-formed questions receive only half-formed answers, and finally Poe's Raven in the form of a crow squawks and Aunt and the girls are invited into John's specially prepared home.

There is great attention to detail. When John forces himself on the most repressed of the sisters the scene is shot through blood-red roses. A film of childhood carefully matching the action plays in the background. The film runs out, not when she loses her virginity, but as she begins to enjoy it; a touch of unconscious Catholicism. This is a film that rises above its parts because its parts are done so well - there isn't a scene that hasn't been carefully thought out.

The girls end up nude, hanging by their hands from meat hooks. The aunt, her face sprayed with suitable attractant, is left near the family bee-hives. John prepares to apply the skills he has learnt in the slaughter-house and then things begin to go wrong, and twist follows twist to the finale.

And the bell? Well, it does come into it and not just because Claudio Guerin-Hill died on the last day of shooting by falling from the bell-tower. One of the characters is used as a counterweight for it, the rope around the neck, naturally. Not exactly central to the plot, but they liked occult titles in 1973. Definitely recommended.

Charlie Philipps



Renaud Verley in *BELL OF HELL*

## CHAOS PERVERS

**Produced and directed by Mike Luis and Charlie Onrop**  
West Germany, 1977

A kind of demented sequel to *EXCESSE DE SADE*, featuring the same actors under different names (which matters little, as they're all doubtless pseudonyms - consider the second director's surname...). What we have here is something more than the regular menu of filth. Even by German standards, *CHAOS PERVERS* is pretty heavy shit (!), concerning the fortunes of a bored libertine who moves pretty quickly down the slippery slope to rock bottom human scum behaviour. Our man turns up drunk at a party, humiliating the entire assembly by passing on everyone and everything in sight. An incredibly ugly, bloated hag is singled out and has a whole cucumber inserted into her yawning chasm. Food is thrown all over her. Endless orgies ensue, the hardest of fuck/suck scenes given that the context isn't violent S&M, until a massive (fake?) scat scene provides the highlight of the 'movie'. The next thing you know, the degenerate turns up in a fag/slag bar dressed in black leather chaps and blockhead leather gear ranting and raving - sort of a Kurtz porno speech - whilst an acid-type flashback takes place, showing the libertine hurling handfuls of shit at all and sundry, and smearing the stuff everywhere.



The nihilistic hate rant continues, including a bout of Russian roulette, as the libertine, now dressed in a German helmet, mounts a bike - cue Hitler speech, wild music and Angerbore photographic references. The slob rides off into the gloomy distance and the viewer drops dead ....

I've always been a fan of genuinely gratuitous vileness, and this artefact is ideal viewing for all those 'swinging couple' assholes and wishy-washy 'libertarians' who think they've seen it all. Though not quite in the 'Videodrome' transmission line of **EXCESSE DE SADE** (far more entertaining, in fact), and totally lacking in merit or even vaguely defensible 'qualities', **CHAOS PERVERS** is one of life's great turn-offs - I defy anyone to experience anything other than revulsion as this nasty little number unfolds. Repellant, sick and misanthropic, **CHAOS PERVERS** achieves a level of disgust that most movies can't even approach.

Stefan Jaworzyn

(Mr Jaworzyn's writings in his essential **SHOCK XPRESS** are frequently required to perform an emetic function regarding some of the more pitiful denizens of the sleaze movie scene. In reality a well-adjusted philanthropic pillar of the community, he longs to shed his image as scourge of the genre's blockhead faction and write quiet, thoughtful pieces about movies that exhibit sensitivity and gentle good humour. We are *more* than happy then to provide just such an opportunity in the refined atmosphere of the **EYEBALL** review pages!)

## THE CRIMES OF THE BLACK CAT

aka SETTE SCIALLI DI SETA GIALLA  
/ SEVEN SHAWLS OF YELLOW SILK

**Directed by Sergio Pastore.** Screenplay by Alessandro Continenza, Giovanni Simonelli, Sergio Pastore. Photographed by Guglielmo Mancori. Edited by Vincenzo Tomassi. Art direction by Alberto Boccianti. Music by Manuel de Sica. Costumes by Luciana Marinucci. Special effects by Eugenio Ascani. Produced by Edmondo Amati. Capitolina Produzioni Cinematografiche, Italy 1972 (Techniscope)

**Cast:** Anthony Steffen (Antonio de Teffe), Sylva Koscina, Giacomo Rossi-Stuart, Jeanette Len, Renato di Carmine, Umberto Raho, Romano Malaspina, Annabella Incontrera, Liliana Pavlo, Isabelle Marchal, Shirley Corrigan.

This highly watchable "giallo poliziesco" didn't receive a British release until four years after it was made, when it was picked up by Border Films who had released Bava's **BLACK SUNDAY** after an eight year ban. **CRIMES OF THE BLACK CAT** did not escape the censor unscathed either, and it's original 108-minute running time was pruned by ten minutes. Closely resembling a generic "greatest hits" package, Pastore's film borrows plot twists from Argento and Bava, and a murder sequence from Hitchcock. In fact, it was the extremely graphic variation on the **PSYCHO** shower slashing that caused the film to be cut.

Set in Copenhagen, the complicated plot tells of a bizarre series of killings that decimate a group of models working for boutique owner Francoise (Koscina). Each victim is killed by a cat whose claws have been dipped in curare, and the only clues are the yellow silk shawls found near the bodies, which have been treated with a substance highly irritating to cats. Peter Oliver (Steffen), a blind composer, sets out to find the culprit after his girlfriend Paula falls foul of the lethal felines. The brutal stabbing of Harry, a photographer, reveals that Paula had been having an affair with Francoise's husband, Victor (Rossi Stuart), and was

blackmailing him. Peter's investigations put him on the trail of a mysterious, white-cloaked woman, who turns out to be the cat's owner. She is Susan, an ex-circus star who now runs a seedy pet shop. Addicted to heroin, she has agreed to co-operate with the real killer in return for a continuous supply of drugs. At the film's climax, having razored Peter's new girlfriend Margo (Len), to death, Francoise is revealed to be the murderer. Her body had been hideously disfigured in a car-crash for which Victor was responsible and she had killed Paula in a desperate attempt to keep her husband for herself. The subsequent murders were committed in order for her to avoid discovery. The police burst in and she hurls herself out of the window of Peter's apartment.

Despite the glaringly obvious lifts from **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE** and **THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE**, **THE CRIMES OF THE BLACK CAT** is a worthy addition to the "giallo" school. Handsomely mounted, and making excellent use of the imposing Copenhagen locations, the film contains some genuinely eerie, surreal scenes. The highlight of the picture takes place in an old factory, with showers of broken glass crashing down around the bewildered hero. Other standout scenes, atmospherically shot by Mancori, a talented cameraman too often wasted on dismal sexploitation efforts like Joseph Warren (Giuseppe Vari)'s **SISTER EMMANUELLE**, include the hooded figure of Susan prowling the deserted streets at night, and a murder attempt in a darkened hospital room. Pastore does a creditable job of building and maintaining the suspense, and his endearing fondness for hysterical zooming and sledgehammer editing effects (Koscina goes through the window three times in slow motion, for example) is nowhere near as detrimental to the film's mood as some idiot critics would have us believe. De Sica's twitching, nervous, jazz-based score is also very effective, adding a suitably neurotic undercurrent to the on-screen mayhem.

On the acting front, the honours definitely belong to the Yugoslavian-born Koscina. Looking fabulously brassy, she goes well over the top in the lurid finale. Slashing the insipid Jeanette Len to ribbons in the shower, she next goes after Steffen, finally managing to pin him up against the wall. "You're a monster!", he screams, pushing her away. "Yes I am!", she hisses back, "Even though you can't see it!" At which point her black plastic raincoat opens up to reveal her hideously disfigured breasts and abdomen! By comparison, the other leads, especially Spaghett Western regular Steffen, give unexceptional performances. But it is always nice to see familiar faces like Raho (**THE SPECTRE**, **NIGHT OF THE DEVILS**), Incontrera (**GOLIATH AND THE ISLAND OF THE VAMPIRES**, **BLACK BELLY OF THE TARANTULA**), and Corrigan (**THE DEVIL'S NIGHTMARE**, **DR JEKYLL AND THE WOLFMAN**) among the supporting cast.

Along with Sergio Martino's **TORSO**, **THE CRIMES OF THE BLACK CAT** is among the best of the Italian commercial cinema's Argento cash-ins. It is more stylish than Paolo Cavara's **BLACK BELLY OF THE TARANTULA**, and more coherent than Umberto Lenzi's ridiculous **SPASMO**. Unfortunately, Pastore's later work, including 1982's **APOCALYPSE OF AN EARTHQUAKE**, has been of negligible interest.

Mark Ashworth



## THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN aka LES EXPERIENCES EROTIQUES DE FRANKENSTEIN / LA MALEDICION DE FRANK- ENSTEIN / THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN

**Directed by Jesus Franco.** Photographed by Raoul Artigot. Music by H. Tical, Vincent Geminia, Victor de Costa. Produced by Vicor de Costa. A Comptoir Francais du Film / Ferrix Production, Spain 1972 (Scope)

**Cast:** Howard Vernon, Anne Libert, Dennis Price, Britt Nichols, Alberto Dalbes, Luis Barboo, Beatrice Savon, Jesus Franco.

The films of Jesus Franco defy simple comment. With over 150 movies under his belt in less than 30 years, it might seem unlikely for many of his movies to display individual characteristics. But despite their general preoccupation with aberrant sex and violence, the range of mood and visual style is greater than one might have expected from a director who has sometimes made as many as ten films in one year! (At least one factor which contributes to the diversity of his work is the discernible variation in the effort made by this lunatic auteur to make any sense at all!)



The element of Franco's 'style' to which the most attention has been drawn is his propensity for the zoom lens, the use of which, to listen to his critics' ravings, would seem equivalent in film making terms to leaving the lens cap on. One can just imagine impressionable geeks who write these 'technical' criticisms in some of the more shrivelled organs of the horror genre using their high-handed dismissal of the zoom as 'received professional wisdom' with which to pepper their one-buff-to-another blatherings. Quite apart from the fact that in certain cases, Franco's use of the zoom lens has a distinct and effective structural application, it really isn't as obtrusive and aesthetically offensive as many critics claim, even when it is obvious that it is being employed to avoid the time and effort required to move the camera. Perspective distortion is certainly alright by me, who the hell wants everything to look like **THE BICYCLE THIEVES**?

Describing the plot of this movie is almost pointless, but briefly, it concerns the abduction of Dr. Frankenstein's beloved, silver-painted Monster-cum-muscleman by an allegedly immortal bug-eyed libertine called Cagliostro, played with coke-crazed intensity by Howard Vernon. Also a party to this mis-deed is the astonishing Bird woman, Melissa (Libert), who bursts into the unfortunate Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory (Dennis Price, looking completely befuddled in the doctor's role) and claws him temporarily (!) to death. She's naked save for the irregular patches of feathers she sports, and communicates in a series of rambling poetic/diarrhoetic monologues, interspersed with strangled squawks. Cagliostro uses the Monster to assist him in collecting

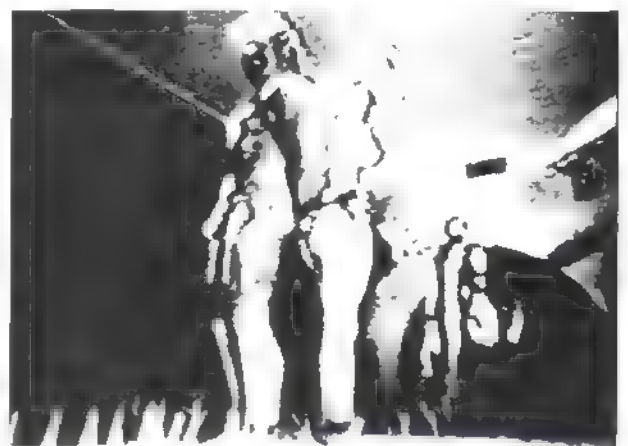
young women upon whom he exerts his hypnotic gaze, a saucer-eyed glare which eventually reduces women to glazed oaths of complete subservience.

One of the highlights of Cagliostro's social calender is an evening at home in his massive castle watching a naked man and woman tied back to back being whipped ferociously for a long time. Around them is a circle of viciously sharp spikes - when one or the other can stand the flogging no more they are faced with the thorny moral dilemma of deciding whether to fall forward onto the spikes or backward so that their partner cushions the fall. Such a spectacle clearly appeals to the assorted skeletons, corpses, candy-skulls-on-sticks and **FELLINI-SATYRICON** lens-starters who've gathered to watch, all of whom are holding robes around themselves like bad biblical extras.

Meanwhile back at the lab', the Holmes and Watson derivatives who are investigating Dr. Frankenstein's death find in his notebooks the instructions for animating a corpse! Following his simple step-by-step guide, they revive him and pump him for information about his killers. It takes several intense post-mortem interviews with the good Doctor to establish the name of Cagliostro from the dead man's nonsensical ramblings, but eventually they are on their way to a showdown with the fiendish libertine, and eventually force him to flee by persuading the monster to attack his new master. Cagliostro rides off into the sea in a horse-drawn carnage, laughing maniacally, and there you have it.

Clearly, we are not talking Great Art here - Franco is no Argento, and it's unlikely that his obscure back catalogue contains an **INFERNO** or an **OPERA**. But it would seem that at his best, he operates in a bizarre overlap between Art, Exploitation and Random Lunacy. His work is consistently idiosyncratic, even when it's dull and stupid, which some of it undoubtedly is! Anyone who has seen his appalling **CANNIBALS** or waded through the sludge of the intermittently amusing **BLOODY MOON** is going to be astonished when confronted by the completely different brand of gibberish that is **THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN**. Even when it is at its most ridiculous, Franco, aided greatly by Artigot's hallucinatory wide-angle compositions, manages to make the proceedings as mesmerizing as they are absurd. Also worthy of mention is the quite brilliant score, which combines disturbingly off-kilter jazz with hellish electronic/rock spasms reminiscent of the seminal Kraut-rock group Faust. The version of this film which was available for a while in Britain is cut by an astonishing 25 minutes, and runs for under 70 minutes all told. Whatever the content of the missing footage (at a guess, probably pornographic), there's enough here to make it worth tracking down. Finally a word to the curious - Jesus himself plays Dr. Frankenstein's assistant and is killed in the opening scene.

Stephen Thrower





## THE FEMALE BUTCHER

aka CEREMONIA SANGRIENTA / THE LEGEND OF BLOOD CASTLE / COUNTESS DRACULA / LADY DRACULA / BLOODY CEREMONY / LE VERGINI CAVALCANO LA MORTE

Directed by Jorge Grau. Screenplay by Jorge Grau, Juan Tebar, Sandro Continenza from a story by George Grau. Lighting cameraman - Fernando Arribas. Edited by Pedro del Rey. Music by Carlo Savina. Special effects by Basilio Cortijo. Executive producer - Jose Maria Gonzalez Sunde. An X Films / Luis Films Production, Spain 1972 (scope)

Cast: Lucia Bose, Ewa Aulin, Espartaco Santoni, Ana Farra, Franca Grey, Silvano Tranquilli, Lola Gaos, Angel Memendes, Enrico Vico.

Despite having garnered something of a reputation as a minor classic of the genre, Jorge Grau's interpretation of the Countess Bathory legend appears surprisingly lacklustre, if one can judge accurately from the admittedly truncated version released on video-cassette in this country, under the title **THE LEGEND OF BLOOD CASTLE**. It would seem that several potentially grisly events such as the public decapitation of an alleged vampire, several murders, and the application of an elaborately designed tongue removal device have all been rather less elaborately 'removed' by the censor who seems to have chewed the offending frames out with his teeth. Added to this setback, the video company responsible for the British release must have, like so many others, decided that only the middle third of the original's Scope composition was worth watching, leaving us to ponder scenes where dialogue is conducted between a nose and a padded shoulder. But to leave aside the video butchers and return to the **FEMALE BUTCHER** in question, allowances granted, there is still only a mild pleasure to be had from Grau's film.

The story is fairly simple - whilst the surrounding Hungarian countryside is being terrorized by incidents of supposed vampirism, the local Countess (Bose) is mourning the loss of her youthful looks. Her husband seems more interested in his falcons than her, so her withered old crone of a servant constantly tempts her with the memory of the previous Erzsébet Bathory who was reputed to have used black magic to retain her youth.

Specifically, the method used was that of bathing in virgin's blood. The Countess soon overcomes her doubts about the rights and wrongs of murdering virgins when an accidental scratch draws blood from a servant girl which spills on the Countess's hand, leaving distinct smooth marks. Soon she's 'accidentally' slashing a little girl with broken glass and, after some inadequately explained twists, even her husband is roped into helping her obtain nubile victims from the village. Eventually her husband falls for a peasant wench despite his wife's renewed appearance and in a fit of jealousy she kills him. After confessing in court to her husband's murders, again with sod all in the way of explanation of her motive for doing so, she is bricked up in her castle with only her de-tongued servant for company.

Strangely, whilst Grau seems to allow some credence to the power of the occult, his film meticulously allows for the incidences of alleged vampirism to be explained away in rational terms. At the court hearing of the evidence condemning a dead man as a vampire (whilst the accused lies dead in a glass coffin in the centre of the courtroom), the hysterical daughter of the 'vampire' claims she was visited by her father during the night and shows the court her throat which bears two messy punctures. Later, however, the Count (Santoni) speaks to the girl alone and asks her if the marks might have been made by the sharp links of a necklace she wears whilst sleeping. When he demonstrates by

pulling the necklace across her throat, two imperfectly fitted points of metal in the chain catch in the wound and fit precisely. Later the Count mocks peasant superstition surrounding a 'cursed' pendant, the previous owners of which are said to have died within a year of choosing to wear it, and wears the pendant himself. The result appears as deadly as predicted. It is later revealed, however, that the apparent death of the Count and his subsequent appearance as one of the undead is faked, and with no motivation to which the audience is privileged, he merely obtains virgins for his wife's blood showers. On the other hand, the virgin's blood in which the Count's youth-obsessed wife bathes is shown to have a subtle but noticeable effect on her skin.

A similar inconsistency is noticeable in his far more enjoyable and best known film **THE LIVING DEAD AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE**. In it, the scourge of the living dead is shown to be the result of radiation from an untested machine designed to kill insects and parasites, and in wider sense environmental pollution of all kinds is cited as the indirect cause. But conflicting with this 'scientific' (!) rationale is a scene showing a principle zombie 'resurrecting' more cadavers by daubing blood from a recent kill onto their eyelids - a rather poetic method totally at odds with the main 'explanation'. To what degree **THE FEMALE BUTCHER**'s inconsistencies and omissions are due to the ridiculous censorship of the print is unclear - what does remain visible however amounts to little more than a sporadically well-shot vampire costume-drama with perhaps just enough narrative momentum to hold one's attention during a rainy Sunday afternoon as an alternative to The Antiques Roadshow.

Stephen Thrower

## FIVE DOLLS FOR AN AUGUST MOON aka CINQUE BAMBOLE PER LA LUNA D'AGOSTO / FIVE DOLLS FOR THE AUGUST MOON / ISLAND OF TERROR

Directed by Mario Bava. Director of production - Luigi Alessi. Screenplay by Mario di Nardo. Director of photography - Antonio Rinaldi. Edited by Mario Bava. Art direction by Giuseppe Aldebaran. Music by Piero Umiliani. Song "Neve Calda" by Jeruso/Simonelli, performed by I Cantori Moderni d'Alessandrini. Italy, 1970

Cast: William Berger, Ira de Furstenberg, Edwige Fenech, Helena Ronee, Edith Meloni, Justine Gall (Ely Galleani), Howard Ross (Renato Rossini), Teodoro Corra, Maurice Poli, Mauro Bosco.

In between the steamy sex drama **FOUR TIMES THAT NIGHT** and the gory body-count movie **BLOODBATH/TWITCH OF THE DEATH NERVE**, Bava churned out this turgid murder mystery for the same company that produced his **ROY COLT AND WINCHESTER JACK**. By his own admission the weakest film he ever made, **FIVE DOLLS** is a confused rehash of Agatha Christie's "The Ten Little Indians". Even a good cast featuring such exploitation favourites as Fenech, Berger and Ross, plus the added spice of aristocratic gossip-column darling Furstenberg, can't save this one.

The script by P.A.C.'s in-house writer di Nardo, who also provided the screenplay for **ROY COLT**, is a thorough exploration of the word 'banal'. Bava's lack of interest is reflected in the Francoesque somnambulism of his direction, which only approaches the inventive visual quality of his better work in a few brief scenes. For most of its length, the film is bogged down with muddled exposition, not helped by an ineffectual 'twist' ending



which Bava tacked on as a way of avenging himself on the producers for lumbering him with such boring material. Similarly, the relationships between some of the characters are never properly clarified and it becomes difficult keeping track of who's who.

The plot concerns a group of wealthy businessmen who gather, along with their respective wives, in a plush villa on a remote island. They are hoping to persuade the chemist Gerry Farrel (Berger), to sell his formula for a revolutionary synthetic resin. He refuses, and soon various members of the party are found murdered in a variety of grisly ways. In the end it is Farrel who is revealed to be the culprit, although he has been presumed to have been shot dead half way through. His accomplice Isabelle (Gall), the daughter of the island's caretaker, takes the cheques intended for the business deal and departs for Switzerland, leaving him in jail, awaiting sentence.

Despite the fact that he had never been defeated by indifferent scripts before, Bava seems to have given up hope on *FIVE DOLLS*. That said, however, the rare occasions when he summons up enough enthusiasm to create something watchable are definitely worth the wait. One outstanding scene consists of dozens of glass globes rolling down a stone spiral staircase. These come to rest in a luxurious bathroom where a woman (Meloni) has just slashed her own wrists. Another highlight occurs at the beginning of the picture when a macabre joke is played on the guests at a party. The host (Corra), wearing a bizarre demon mask, distributes knives among his friends. He tells them that he intends to sacrifice a virgin to an obscure pagan deity, but suddenly the room is plunged into darkness and a scream pierces the air. When the lights come back on, Mary (Fenech) is discovered with a dagger embedded in her stomach. It's only a charade, of course, but the scene pre-empt's Mary's actual demise later in the movie.

The Tunisian born Fenech, subsequently to enliven such cheesy epics as Sergio Martino's *BIG JOANNA WITH THE LONG THIGHS* (1) and Andrea Bianchi's *STRIP NUDE FOR YOUR KILLER*, seems to hold a special fascination for Bava. In the opening scene, we see her performing a frenzied dance, and the relentless high-speed zooms which thrust us towards her scantily clad, gyrating torso take on a strongly sexual significance. Later on Bava focuses attention on a bra she has left on the bed, and when her corpse is found tied to a tree, gives full reign to his celebrated necrophiliac camera. It slowly caresses her voluptuous figure and briefly evokes the chilling delight in suffering that permeated the luscious *BLOOD AND BLACK LACE*.



FANCEY presents **FIVE DOLLS FOR AN AUGUST MOON** color. CERVX

Unfortunately, the effectiveness of moments like these is v.ated by the over-use of ugly 'talking head' shots and some inappropriate sub-Batman zip-panning. The creation of atmosphere is further hampered by Limiliani's utterly dire, travelogue-like score. No amount of claves and bongos can improve what basically sounds like the "Wish You Were Here" theme played

on the "Sale of the Century" organ! Only the childishly sinister faurground music which accompanies the hanging of the corpses in the cold storage room has any impact at all, and this soon wears thin after being repeated for the umpteenth time. Also, although Aldebaran's trendy art direction is quite attractive, the lacklustre mavhem would perhaps have been enhanced if placed in a more ominously baroque setting.

Thankfully, *FIVE DOLLS* proved to be only a temporary artistic setback for Bava. His next film, *BLOODBATH*, handled the theme of an escalating series of murders in a much more explicit fashion. The story by Franco (sometimes Francesco) Barbieri and the ubiquitous Dardano Sacchetti reflects Bava's love of the classics, being closer to a revenge tragedy than a whodunit. As Tim Lucas points out, however, in his excellent Bava retrospective ("Fangoria", issues 42 and 43), the overall tone is more Tex Avery than Middleton and Kydd.

The Italian maestro's subsequent pictures, ranging from the morbidly lyrical *LISA AND THE DEVIL* to the graphically violent *SHOCK*, confirmed that his visual instincts were still as sharp as ever. Even a piece of 'penny-dreadful' hokum like *BARN BLOOD* emerges as a menacingly atmospheric opus, loaded with swirling fog and eerie lighting effects. Unfortunately, a potentially interesting feature called "Roots of Fear" which was to be co-directed with his son Lamberto was dropped when producer Turi Vasile backed out at the last minute.

Mark Ashworth

## THE GESTAPO'S LAST ORGY aka L'ULTIMA ORGIA DEL III REICH

**Directed by** Cesare Canevari. **Story by** Antonio Lucarella. **Director of photography** Claudio Catozzo. **Edited by** Enzo Monachesi. **Music by** Alberto Baldan Bembo (c) S.A.A.R. Milan. **Art Director** Ercole Lura. **Camera** - Sergio Fontane. **Set and costume design by** Alberto Giromella. **Special effects by** Guido Chiappin. **Title song** "Lise" by Ermanno Parazzini, sung by Mynam del Mare and Ingeborg Jordy. **Production manager** - Ruggero Gorgoglione. **A Cine Lu C'o. Production, Italy 1977**

**Cast:** Marc Lourd, Daniela Levy, Mariastella Greco, Fulvio Ricciardi, Antineska Nemour, Caterina Barbero, Domenico Serengat, Vittorio Jodari, Pietro Bosco, Renato Peracchi, Maria Grazia Ciera, Santino Polenghi.

In comparison with the rest of the so-called 'death-camp' genre, *THE GESTAPO'S LAST ORGY* can boast a fraction of intelligence and at times attempts a seriousness which the other entries in this area couldn't muster between them. Canevari does at least seem acquainted with the (misappropriated) literary roots of fascism unlike Don Edmonds, whose turgid *ILSA, SHE-WOLF OF THE S.S.* possesses a pair of ridiculous all-American testicles in place of a brain. Certain scenes and sizeable sections of dialogue display some familiarity with the writings of the Marquis de Sade, and any 'exploitation film' with the audacity to quote Nietzsche in its opening credits deserves some notice! This was no doubt little more than an attempt to cop some of the spurious respectability of Lila Cavani's yawn-inducing *THE NIGHT PORTER*, but rather this than *ILSA...*, with its hypocritical pre-credit caption which burbles "the makers of this film...hope that these terrible events will never happen again." (understandable, given the U.S. Army's performance in Vietnam and the Iran hostage fiasco!) Nietzsche has suffered from having the aphoristic structure of many of his best known works exploited by people eager to embrace fragments of his writings out of context, so the



quote in the film's credits, "When the Superman wishes to amuse himself, he may do so, even at the cost of the life of others" would be irrelevant, were it not a good comment on the extent of any Fascist 'understanding' of Nietzsche.

Five years after being acquitted of alleged war-crimes, an ex-Nazi officer (Loud), drives out to the death camp he used to run. He is meeting Lise (Levy), who we learn was once a prisoner under his control. The film then shows in a prolonged series of flashbacks how Loud gradually became obsessed with his victims' resolve not to beg or scream for mercy when tortured. Such stoicism obviously frustrates the sadist faced with it, and Loud reacts to his impotence by falling into worshipful adoration of her. We discover that her resolve has its source in her mistaken belief that she was responsible for the death of her family at the hands of the Nazis, and the subsequent guilt has taken away her will to live. When she is told of her innocence by a doctor in the camp with access to her file, she regains the will to live, and her first thoughts are naturally of revenge. Perceiving that the officer has fallen in love with her, she strings him on until after the war when she has the opportunity to kill him.



*Gestapo Facial Scrub!*

Production values are high, and Canevari musters a few surprisingly atmospheric compositions. Wide-angle shots of the deserted, post-war 'leben-camp', it's once deadly ovens now just filthy tunnels hung with cobwebs and overgrown by weeds are followed later by a bizarre sequence in which we see these same tunnels deployed. A group of naked women, the old, overweight, pregnant and deformed, run screaming as overhead gas jets belch flames over their distorted bodies. These images, seen only briefly, are nightmarish in a way not usually encountered in the Nazi cycle of films, depicting as they do victims far more realistic than the Barbie-doll t&a normally on show. As noted, we are not in a genuine death-camp, but a 'love-camp' or brothel for the purpose of helping exhausted, sex-starved soldiers relax and gain morale at the expense of the female prisoners. In another untypical sequence, we see a line of naked German soldiers furtively groping themselves and each other, whilst they are shown slides of 'Jewish' women performing perverse acts such as coprophilia and lesbian incest to demonstrate the 'decadent inferiority' of their race.

The love camp location is necessary of course to ensure the requisite number of attractive young bimbos, and cuts out any 'unexploitable' elements such as skeletal old men tottering around covered in sores. We are after all dealing principally with heterosexual S&M fantasy, given that extra bit of piquancy by the Nazi fancy dress and the occasional hints of perverse, polysexual goings-on. As usual, none of the assembled cast display any hint of Jewish or Aryan physiognomy at all, the heroine instead resembling some unfortunate splicing of Karen Black and Agnetha Fältskog from Abba! As for the soldiers, at least none are quite so blatantly Mediterranean as the swarthy Latin male-

models posing their way through Sergio Garrone's *S.S. EXPERIMENT CAMP*. The dialogue manages to be engagingly lurid, supplemented by some fiendish gloating from the obligatory Nazi lesbian, who of course indulges in displays of dommatrix Naziness with men too, for the benefit of those in the audience for whom being caught masturbating by mummy was a pivotal point in sexual development! Loud, who plays a semi-bastardised Bogarde to Levy's Rampling puts in a performance which tries to steer clear of the Dick Dastardly histrionics generally exhibited in these movies. He's no De Niro, however, but then neither is De Niro these days...

There are some distinct minus points, chiefly the cloying title music which pops up again later to accompany the one truly nauseating moment in the film. Our glassy-eyed heroine has a prolonged bout of bovine 'love-making' with that other death-camp staple, the liberal and guilt-ridden doctor. Like the similar 'healthy' sex scene in Ken Russell's *CRIMES OF PASSION*, it only serves to make one grateful for the pleasures of 'warped' sexuality! In cruder terms of atrocities-per-reel, Canevari seems to forget such genre considerations after the repellant "Joy of Sex" interlude, fobbing us off instead with Loud and Levy floating around on a lake in some sort of punt as if auditioning for Derek Jarman, and there are those who would say that no amount of arty camerawork can compensate for an absence of tasteless torture scenes. Nonetheless, Cesare Canevari would seem worth keeping an eye out for. That is of course, if he was ever allowed to make another film after suspending woman upside down over live rats until they vomit, burning them, dropping them down slides into a quicklime bath and throwing in mass rape, castration, coprophilia and humiliating nudity, (albeit well photographed and furnished with a suitably vengeful finale in which the long-suffering Levy gets even with Loud, who escaped the post-war courts without being punished.)

Stephen E. Thrower

## A LIZARD IN A WOMAN'S SKIN

aka *UNA LUCERTOLA CON LA PELLE DI DONNA/UNA LUGARTIJA CON PIEL DE MUJER/SCHIZOID/LE VENIN DE LA PEUR/CAROLE*

**Directed by** Lucio Fulci. **Written by** Roberto Gianviti, Jose Luis Martinez Molla, Andre Tranche. **Photographed by** Luigi Kuveiller. **Special effects by** Carlo Rambaldi. **Produced by** Edmondo Amati for International Apollo/Les Films Corona/Atlantida Films. **Italy, 1971.** (scope)

**Cast:** Florinda Bolkan, Stanley Baker, Jean Sorel, Leo Genn, Silvia Strindberg, Anita Strindberg, Georges Rigaud, Alberto de Mendoza, Mike Kennedy, Edy Galleani.

Fulci may have gained cult acclaim for his grisly and atmospheric zombie films, but his work outside the genre is generally greeted with derision. Certainly, films like *THE NAPLES CONNECTION* and *ROME 1933: THE FIGHTER CENTURIONS* leave much to be desired, even considering the extreme violence of the former. But whilst he may lack any substantial creative flair when he strays too far from his doom-laden horror movies, this early seventies thriller set in a peculiarly moribund 'swinging' London deserves more credit than Fulci's detractors have given it. With a tortuous plot based around the questionable hallucinations of a sexually repressed woman, Fulci has plenty of opportunity to escape the confines (some would say rigours!) of straightforward narrative, thereby avoiding the longeurs which plague his



more standard contributions to the thriller format. That's not to say that there's anything particularly radical about the obtuse editing and weird, hand-held camera. Merely, they provide an agreeably odd palliative to the over-convoluted machinations of the plot.

Florinda Bolkan stars as a wealthy woman plagued by an obsessive attraction to her decadent next-door neighbour, Julia Durer (Strindberg), whose frequent late-night parties infuriate and yet excite her, evoking images of wild sex-and-drug orgies. Things get complicated during scenes which seem to be dreams or hallucinations, but which may be partly real. They depict a strange lesbian encounter between the two women, culminating in Bolkan's grisly stabbing of the seductive Strindberg. In a strange coda to the killing, Bolkan sees two kaftan-clad hippies who have apparently witnessed the whole thing without intervening. Some days later, it emerges that Strindberg has indeed been murdered, and the room and condition of the corpse are identical to their depiction in the 'dream' sequence. The question that the plot squirms around frantically to avoid answering until the final scene is, did Bolkan really commit the murder? Doubt about the killer's identity is only really maintained, however, by the particularly underhand trick played by the 'dream' sequences. Bolkan did indeed kill Strindberg, who had been blackmailing her by threatening to reveal their lesbian relationship. Then, feeling sure that the hippy witnesses would report her to the police, she entered the whole thing in a dream diary kept at the request of her psychoanalyst. By combining details of the murder with images from the recurring nightmares for which she had sought treatment, she hoped to avoid the murder sentence by producing the dream diaries as plausible evidence of schizophrenia. She hadn't realised that the witnesses were high on acid and unable to register the significance of what they saw, seeing her only as 'a lizard in a woman's skin'; a rather ludicrous irony, dependent on a tabloid-level understanding of the effects of LSD. The hippies were shown during the murder sequence with the cataract-covered eyes familiar from *THE BEYOND* - it would seem that Fulci regards hallucinogens as inhibiting, rather than expanding one's consciousness...the miserable old goat! Anyway, it is this version of events to which we are unknowingly exposed in the bizarre murder sequence.

It has to be said that this conclusion points once more to a naive conservative tendency in Fulci's work. In *LIZARD...*, he seems to think that 'so-called' schizophrenia is merely a ploy by which calculating and callous criminals evade 'justice'! It's not so surprising though, when one remembers that Fulci is a pessimistic, tormented Catholic; concepts like schizophrenia are unpopular with the Catholic church, obsessed as it is with sin and man's culpability. Divine retribution hardly functions when the 'sinner' in question can claim diminished responsibility! The conflicts which Bolkan's character labours under are more accurately those which must beleague Fulci himself, an interpretation which seems valid when one bears in mind films like *THE NEW YORK RIPPER* and *CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD*, with their obsessive coupling of sexual desire, guilt and physical disgust. Fulci seems recurrently drawn to, and yet repelled by, unbridled sexuality. Unfortunately, here he lacks the artistic courage to assign the hang-ups from which he suffers to any of his male characters, a failure which diminishes the potency of his work by trying to evade the connection it must have to him personally. But at least Fulci tries to cope with his prejudices, as evidenced by the gay psychiatrist played by Paolo Malco in *THE NEW YORK RIPPER*, whose initial role as suspected murderer is shown to belie his position as the only perceptive character in the investigation of the gruesome killings. Only seven years earlier, in 1975, his film *DRACULA IN THE PROVINCES*, according to Phil Hardy's "Aurum Horror Encyclopaedia", portrayed homosexuality as "both terrifying and ludicrous". It seems fair then, to observe that Fulci does attempt to transcend what Hardy's rather

pompous book calls his "retarded rural Catholicism"!

A more thoroughgoing analysis of Fulci's warped sexual and religious hang-ups might be worth undertaking elsewhere, but aside from these considerations there are still plenty of things to enjoy in *A LIZARD IN A WOMAN'S SKIN*. The locations are often impressive, and one notable sequence depicting a cat-and-mouse chase through various crypts and cellars up onto the roof of the old Alexandra Palace looks especially fabulous. Sadly, Carlo Rambaldi's infamous and reputedly realistic-looking disembowelled dogs are excised from the UK video print, but the film is still distinguished by a couple of gruesome killings which should even satisfy those for whom gore is inordinately important. There's also an excellent scene in which Bolkan is attacked by bats in a manner reminiscent of the surreal attack sequences in Hitchcock's *THE BIRDS*. Likewise, if one can forgive the outrageous contrivance they present, the dream/murder sequences are disorientating and effectively claustrophobic, never more so than when depicting Bolkan struggling down a crowded train corridor packed with nasty-looking passengers who abruptly appear naked as she tries to squeeze between them. Amongst all this, a brief bit of split-screen flambouyance pops up for no good reason, unless it was conceived by a jaundiced Fulci as a suitably empty cinematic device to echo the lead character's sham schizophrenia. All in all, *A LIZARD IN A WOMAN'S SKIN* emerges, despite Fulci's limitations, as a divertingly downbeat oddity worth a bit more credit than it has previously been afforded.

Stephen Thrower.

## LUCKER aka NECROPHAGOUS

Directed, written and edited by Johan Vandewoestijne. Screenplay by Vandewoestijne and John Kupferschmidt. Production design by Flip Beys. Camera - Tony Castillo. Executive producer - Johan Vandewoestijne. A Desert Production for VDS Films, Belgium 1986.

Cast: Nick Van Suyt, Helga Vandeveld, Let Jodts, Marie-Paule Claes, Martine Scherre, Carry Van Middel, John Edwards, Tony Castillo, Frank Van Laecke, Freek Neiryck.

It's good to know that there are still a few directors who are prepared to air their scummiest obsessions on screen, and this Belgian film boasts some of the dirtiest laundry the genre's seen for quite a while. To judge from the credits, a degree of personal interest on Mr Vandewoestijne's part seems disconcertingly possible - he appears to have hogged the whole production, though certainly not to the film's detriment. *LUCKER* is a wonderfully sordid piece of filth unlikely to be granted any sort of release in this country.

John Lucker, the film's eponymous 'hero' is a slobbish, overweight necrophile whose tastes run to the older, more mature cadaver. That is, although he chooses as his victims ordinary, fairly young women, he feels that corpses, like jugged hare or a good cheese, improve when left to rot for a while!

Necrophilia is a subject often alluded to in horror movies, and it provides a motivating subtext to several of the genre's classics. And yet, in the seventies, when taboos were being trampled virtually into cliché, few movies explored necrophilia in all its potentially rancid detail. The frequency of its presence as a psycho-sexual undercurrent is apparent, and repeatedly aestheticised in various studies of the genre, but one suspects that *LUCKER*'s bluntness in dealing with the act itself would find scant favour with the knee-jerk moral sensibilities of many critics. It's a film that reminds us pointedly what necrophilia really is -





screwing dead bodies.

The only version available for review to date is a French language print without subtitles. Fortunately, as most of the events depicted take place with minimal dialogue, this proved only slightly limiting. Lucker himself coasts through the film on a few noncommittal grunts, only breaking his silence near the end, when he bursts into a frantic tirade against an audience of two trussed-up victims.

Most horror films have their set-pieces and **LUCKER** boasts one of extraordinary repulsiveness, elevating the movie to a very distinguished sleaze level. Our degenerate lead straps a young whore to a bed and viciously cuts her throat - she thrashes around bleeding profusely and eventually dies, after which he covers her with a sheet. We spend the subsequent 'week' in the stuffy apartment with him, whilst the passage of time is marked out by title cards and a voice-over stating each day of the week. We see him variously lounging around, drinking beer, smoking vast numbers of cigarettes and gazing inscrutably out of the window. Eventually, when he can no longer stand the anticipation, he returns to the bedroom and uncovers the corpse....(Keith Simpson's book "Forensic Medicine", published by Edward Arnold, £13.50, states that on land, green and purplish discoloration with gaseous swelling of the abdomen occurs in about five to six days.) Lucker's lady friend is now bloated, mis-shapen and almost black. Nonetheless he shows signs of considerable arousal. He fingers the rather slimy pubic mound, then licks his fingers, a scene guaranteed to disgust almost anyone. As for the following scenes of steaming passion; suffice to say they involve distressing close-ups of flabby male buttocks which ought to finish off those hardy souls still watching the movie. At this point it seems right to point out that Nick Van Suyt, the no doubt charming and well-adjusted family man who plays John Lucker, turns in a real trooper's performance. It takes an actor of considerable elan to breathe life into such a scuzzy character, so despite the disparaging remarks about his *gluteous maximus*, all praise to him! It would be interesting to know if Mr Van Suyt includes **LUCKER** in his CV...

A set-piece as immense as the one described could unbalance a lesser film, with the surrounding scenes paling into blandness. This is not the case here - the extreme nature of Lucker's obsessive desire is carefully underscored in scenes which depict him wandering alone through sterile and deserted locations which emphasize his 'outsider' status. From a virtually empty hospital, through a couple of remote and dingy small-town locations, each setting contributes to the movie's detached and clinical tone. Vandewoestijne also appreciates the importance of spatial composition as a means of creating such a mood - in one extended and coldly impressive scene he shows Van Suyt walking listlessly down the centre lane of an apparently disused motorway. The grey pillars and slabs of concrete supporting an overpass are employed as stylish but subdued framing. There

appears to have been a conscious decision to discourage attempts to understand or 'identify' with Lucker - his almost total silence and predilection for '70's -style mirrored shades inhibit such approaches. This is in contrast to Lustig's **MANIAC** for instance, a film not dissimilar to **LUCKER** which used voice-over mumbblings from Joe Spinell to try and draw audiences closer to the twisted mind of the killer, albeit rather crudely. Unless the French dialogue contains nuances to the contrary, it would also seem that there is no desire to place Lucker's actions in any judgmental moral context. He just *is*, and the director has maintained a detachment from considerations of 'right' and 'wrong' wholly in keeping with the alienated tone of the film. In this respect the film is almost as isolated from the genre it rests in as it's lead character is from the rest of the cast.

The film terminates on an enigmatic note. The killer has dragged two women down into the cellars beneath the flat and subjects them both to hideous torments, including forced oral contact with a severed human head. One of the women survives, escaping through a maze of underground brick passageways reminiscent of those at the climax of Gerard Ciccoritti's **PSYCHO GIRLS**. Lucker appears to get thrown down a lift shaft rather suddenly to his death., but in a confusing coda we see a figure in the street outside the flat stoop to pick up an indecipherable photograph from the pavement. Seen just fleetingly, the figure resembles John Lucker.

In recent years, the volume of seriously disturbing horror films has slowed to a trickle, whilst the trend towards dumb-assed playing for laughs has increased. It is all the more satisfying then to report that **LUCKER** is a sick, twisted, unremittingly repellant downer, which effectively puts Belgium of all places on the Euro-sleaze map.

Stephen Thrower.



Nick van Suyt in **LUCKER**

## MACABRE aka MACABRO/ MACABRE KISS/ FROZEN TERROR

**Directed by** Lamberto Bava. **Script by** Pupi Avati, Roberto Gandus, Lamberto Bava, Antonio Avati. **Photographed by** Franco Delli Colli. **Edited by** Piero Gabutti. **Set design and costumes by** Katia Dottori. **Special effects by** Tonino Corridori and Angelo Mattei. **Music by** Ubaldo Continiello. **Song: "Jane In Love" by** Gil Ventura. **Produced by** Gianni Minervini and Antonio Avati for A.M.A. Film/ Medusa. **Italy, 1980. Telecolor.**

**Cast:** Bernice Stagers, Stanko Molnar, Veronica Zinny, Roberto Posse, Ferdinando Orlandi, Fernando Pannullo, Elisa Kadiga Bove.



Along with Dario Argento's *INFERNO*, Lamberto Bava's directorial debut is one of the best horror films of the last decade. As noted by Kim Newman in the "Monthly Film Bulletin" (June 1983) Lamberto began his career as a solo director in much the same way as his father had twenty years previously: "(Mario Bava) was allowed to make *LA MASCHERA DEL DEMONIO* as a reward for completing *I VAMPIRI* when Riccardo Freda fell ill; and Lamberto has been able to finance *MACABRO* on the strength of *SHOCK-TRANSFERT-SUSPENCE-HYPNOS*, a film credited to his father but almost completely the work of the son." Newman goes on to say that Bava Sr's influence is very apparent throughout the picture, and although this is true to an extent, perhaps the most direct influence is co-script writer Pupi Avati. In common with Avati's superb *THE HOUSE WITH THE WINDOWS THAT LAUGH*, *MACABRE* exudes an extremely eerie, obsessively morbid atmosphere, accentuated by calm, controlled direction and a sensitive, jazz-tinged score. The skillfully constructed screenplay centres around a woman, Jane (Stegers) and her bizarre sexual obsession with the severed head of her lover which she keeps in the freezer compartment of her refrigerator. Her blind landlord (Molnar) becomes increasingly suspicious when he hears the sounds of love-making coming from her apartment upstairs. Searching her bedroom while she is out, he finds an ear-lobe on the unmade bed. He alerts Jane's estranged husband (Panullo) but he refuses to have anything more to do with her. However, Jane's malicious young daughter (Zinny) discovers her mother's secret and puts the ear-lobe in her soup! Driven completely over the edge, Jane strangles her daughter and attacks Molnar, but is killed when he pushes her onto the hot-plate of a table-top oven. In an inappropriate conclusion, all too derivative of *CARRIE*, Molnar is savaged to death by the severed head. Despite being an effective shock moment, this does seem like a tacked-on afterthought, suggesting that the writers weren't quite sure how to end their story. The rest of the script however is extremely well written and even the dubbed dialogue sounds convincing for a change.

*MACABRE* is set in New Orleans, but was actually shot almost entirely in the villa of Mussolini's mistress Claretta Petacci at Salo, the town in Northern Italy where Pasolini re-located his infamous adaptation of De Sade's brilliant "120 Days of Sodom". Bava makes thorough use of the brooding, oppressive interiors and approaches his subject with tenderness and restraint, placing the emphasis firmly on the characters and their conflicting obsessions. He is ably assisted by the talents of Stegers, Zinny and the Yugoslavian born Molnar, all of whom give excellent performances. Stegers is especially impressive, even though she says "I found it difficult to take seriously...I mean, that head in the fridge!"

Bava's later work, *DEMONS* for example, takes its inspiration from various cinematic sources. *MACABRE* on the other hand has its roots in a literary tradition which encompasses writers like M.R. James and Edgar Allan Poe. Although allegedly based on a true series of events, and only taking on a supernatural aspect at the very end, the film is structured like a classic ghost story, with the emphasis on characterisation and plot development. In fact, the subtlety of Bava's approach is decidedly out of sorts with the period in which the film was made, and unfortunately, it was only moderately successful when released theatrically in Italy. Talking to Alan Jones in "Cinefantastique" Bava explained that he could have pushed the grislier elements of the tale further, but wanted to explore the nature of the characters' obsessions. It was a wise choice, because *MACABRE* emerges as one of the most insidiously chilling pictures in recent memory.

Mark Ashworth.

## THE NIGHT EVELYN CAME OUT OF THE GRAVE

aka *LA NOTTE CHE EVELYN USCÌ DALLA TOMBA* / *THE NIGHT SHE AROSE FROM THE TOMB*

Directed by Emilio P. Miraglia. Screenplay by Miraglia, Fabio Pittoru, Massimo Felisatti. Photographed by Gastone di Giovanni. Produced for Phoenix Cinematografica, Italy 1971 (scope).

Cast: Anthony Steffen (Antonio de Teffe), Erika Blanc, Marina Malfatti, Rod Murdock, Giacomo Rossi-Stuart, Umberto Raho, Roberto Maldera, Joan C. Davies.

This essentially wretched Spaghetti sex/horror yawnfest has a few acceptable exploitation elements but is largely made up of ridiculous people in hilarious clothes ranting and mumbling endlessly. Remember the high fashion standards set by Jean Brismee's *THE DEVIL'S NIGHTMARE*? Erika Blanc in her outlandish costumes? Well, there's plenty more where that came from, and much of it here...

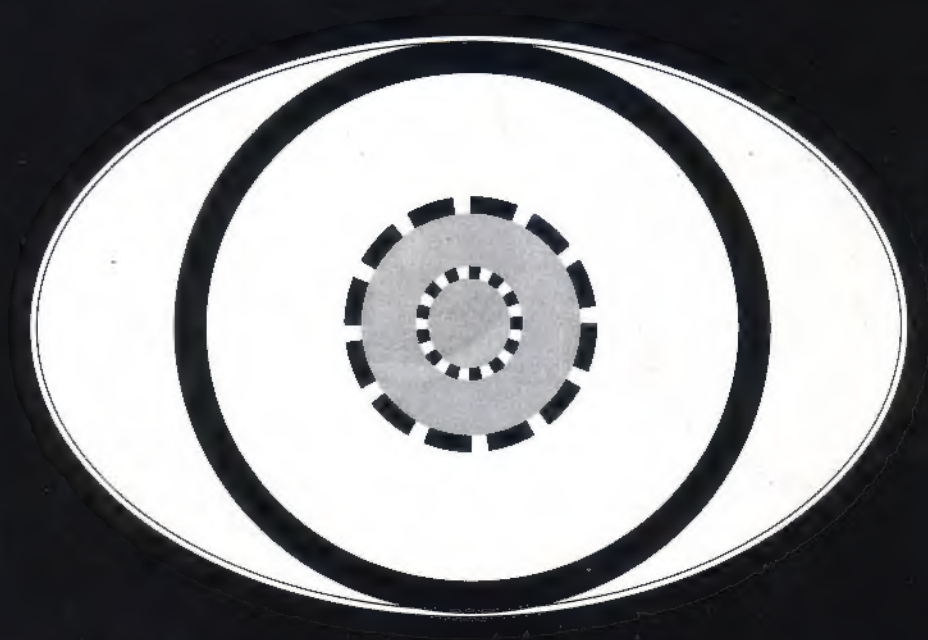
This rubbish starts with a pre-credits 'escape from the loony-bin' sequence, with some wild hand-held camera and interesting psychotronic elements. Next we have a maniac picking up a cheap tart ('Polly' - ludicrous English accents abound...) and taking her back to his place. It's not long before they hit the torture chamber and he is just about to brand the bitch when he has a demented flashback to the delirious Evelyn romping naked in the garden in slow motion...boredom exists for an eternity before our man picks up another hag (this time it's Blanc), has her put on kinky thigh boots (whew!), whips her and chases her around with a syringe. She's topless in hot-pants and those bloody awful boots. Alan, our 'hero', has a swinging party with the worst group ever playing. He marries a woman whom he meets there and weird things start to happen, all of them boring. A wheelchair bound semi-crone dies (very brief gore), is tossed into a cage of foxes (!) and is torn apart at excessive length. The scene takes place in more or less pitch darkness. That was Aunt Agatha, by the way...

Evelyn does finally rise from the grave, but it's all a con to drive Alan round the bend again. Who cares that there's some double and triple crossing going on? Blanc and Malfatti finally get down to a brief cat-fight, die, and it's up to Alan to save himself by throwing the bad guy (you don't care who he is, believe me!) into a swimming pool and tossing in a bag of 'Acidum Sulphurium' (honestly). The bad guy is dragged out by the police screaming "I'm burning!" Total garbage with zero fantasy element (unless you count Blanc, and you'd have to be pretty desperate to do so...) Torture dungeons were de rigueur at the time, but the whole mess has little to lift it above the dozens of similar films of the period. It's funny that as you get to see these 'legendary' titles, they all turn out to be abysmally boring and vastly over-rated by the few that saw them, stoned usually, on their initial releases...

Stefan Jaworzyn.







## NEXT ISSUE:

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THE DIABOLICAL DR. Z!  
ROLLIN'S REQUIEM FOR A  
VAMPIRE, RAISINS DE LA  
MORTE & THE LIVING DEAD  
GIRL!**

**FRANCO'S VENUS IN FURS &  
SADIST OF NOTRE DAME!!**

*PLUS:*

**NUN MOVIES!**

**STRIP NUDE FOR ALAN JONES!**

**STEFAN JAWORZYN ON ITALY  
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**WHORES, HAMS & STRUMPETS  
- A 'WHERE ARE THEY NOW?'  
GUIDE TO SPAGHETTI SCUM  
QUEENS...**

## EYEBALL:

**THE EUROPEAN SEX & HORROR  
REVIEW.**

**ISSUE No. 1 - AUTUMN 1989**

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Thanks to:

Peter Christopherson, Paul, Barrie Dwyer,  
Paola Guerra, Max Orlati, Bernice Stegers,  
& Jeff Hildreth.